

“The Company of Jesus in Colonial Brazil and Mexico: Missionary Encounters with
Amerindian Healers and Spiritual Leaders, 1550-1625”

Dissertation

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Abstract

In this dissertation, I argue that Jesuit missionary writings in the Americas demonized and appropriated indigenous sources of medical knowledge, contributing to the exclusion of indigenous voices from the archive of the western history of science and medicine. I take a critical look at the way in which Jesuits implemented a discourse of sorcery as a strategy to delegitimize Amerindian healers and spiritual leaders that stood in opposition to the colonial occupation of present-day Brazil and Mexico. In chapter 1, I illuminate the cognitive operations behind the Jesuit impulse to impose Christianity on native communities through a reading of Jesuit-authored letters from colonial Brazil, including missionary correspondence from José de Anchieta, Fernão Cardim, and Antônio Vieira as well as a set of anonymous letters penned from São Vicente. In these documents we find that—given the swiftness of smallpox outbreaks—encounters among Jesuit missionaries and Amerindians were often structured around an urgent need to care for the sick, making the study of local medicines all the more necessary. In chapter 2, I analyze Portuguese Jesuit Fernão Cardim's appropriation of indigenous botanical information in his natural history, known today under the title *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil* [*Treatises on the Land and People of Brazil*] (1583-1601). As Cardim's text demonstrates, missionaries wrote natural histories to serve as conversion manuals, set alongside useful information on how to survive in foreign places. In my final chapter, I bring in a natural history from another area of the Americas, José de Acosta's *Historia*

natural y moral de las Indias [*Natural and Moral History of the Indies*] (Sevilla 1590), to demonstrate the systematic approach that the Company of Jesus took in their study of American nature. As visitors to the missions in the Americas, both Cardim and Acosta drew heavily from locally based José de Anchieta and Juan de Tovar as they compiled their studies on colonial Brazil and Mexico respectively. I focus my reading of Acosta's natural history on the spiritual politics of Nahua-Christian ritual encounters in present-day Mexico. I analyze the way in which Jesuit missionaries' ambivalent representations of American botanical medicine worked to value indigenous knowledge of the natural world for practical use, while they criminalized native healers based on alternative spiritual application.

This study focuses on how demonizing discourses, religious in ideology and spiritual in scope, use the notion of universal truth-value and geo-privileged spaces of representation to commit acts of epistemological violence against oppressed communities. Moreover, this study demonstrates that the Jesuit discourse of sorcery was used to legitimize the Christian missionary's "right" to possess indigenous land and extract their natural resources for their own gain, whether spiritual or economic. In order to polemicize the authority that Europeans assumed in these cross-cultural exchanges, this research dialogues with postcolonial debates on the geo-politics of knowledge and power in colonial Latin American studies. Specifically, I work beyond the confines of present-day national borders that have traditionally separated the study of Brazil and Mexico, and I challenge Western-dominated paradigms of scientific authority to highlight the contribution of indigenous knowledge to the history of science and medicine.

Dedication

This project is dedicated to my dear professor, Maureen Ahern. Thank you.

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Introduction

Jesuit Writings from Early Modern Iberian Empires: Deconstructing Magic, Medicine, and Religion

At the turn of the seventeenth century, European missionaries and traveling-mercantilists were buzzing with news of the Americas.¹ This was the age of rapid advancement in European nautical technology, when the East and West became linked via new transatlantic exchange networks that transported people and goods in new circuits throughout the Atlantic world. The Company of Jesus would play a critical role in the development of these newly formed pathways via their global installation of missionaries throughout the early modern Iberian empires and beyond. In this endeavor, Jesuit missionary writings became the trademark of the Order, providing prolific source material for anyone interested in New World narratives. Early on in the Company's overseas missions, St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Order (1540), wrote to Father Gaspar Berceo (Rome, 24 February 1554) to clarify his instructions on his vision for an international network of traveling missionaries. Loyola takes care to draw missionary attention to the fact that:

¹ For a general overview of the period, see Lawrence M. Principe (*The Scientific Revolution: A Very Short Introduction*); he describes this moment as a time when “Europeans had rediscovered their own past, encountered a wider physical and human world, and created new approaches and fresh interpretations of older ideas. Indeed, the best image for their world would be that of a tumultuous and richly stocked marketplace. A cacophony of voices promoted a diversity of ideas, goods, and possibilities” (20).

Persons of importance in the city who read with great profit to themselves the letters from the Indies usually wish, and on various occasions have asked, for something to be written about the geography and the flora and fauna of the countries to which Ours are sent. They would like to know, for instance, the length of the days in summer and winter, when the summer begins, whether the shadow falls to the left or to the right. In a word, they would like information about anything that appears extraordinary, such as unknown animals and plants, their size, and so forth. And this condiment for the taste of certain innocent curiosity in men can be sent in the letters themselves, or on separate sheets.² (325-26)

Loyola's request for more information on practical life in the Indies suggests some of what European readers wanted to know more about "with great profit to themselves."

A general knowledge of the vegetation and climate, for example, would have proven valuable for other missionaries, mercantilists, or colonists with a vested interest in their own colonial projects. Also, this type of information might be sought after by budding naturalists of the day, anxious to get their hands on the latest *exotica* from far-off places. Beyond this, in the Western world of print, new understandings of global geography also spurred interest in travel narratives, as European consumers became fascinated by "otherworldly" curiosities.³ In this regard, Iberian Jesuits were well

² In this study, all citations from Loyola's letters are taken from the anthology *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, (trans. William J. Young, S.J.).

³ The introduction of the New World to European imaginaries had a significant impact on the history of science and medicine (especially as it coincided with the printing press). In their chapter "Marvelous Particulars," Lorraine Daston and Katharine Park point to the

positioned to make a significant contribution to the documentation of American nature.⁴

As they compiled volumes of information on the topic, Jesuits often depended on Amerindian sources to learn the virtues of local plants in their colonial missions, which they, in turn, Christianized for their own use.

The Christianization of American botany was part of a larger battle that Jesuit missionaries waged in the name of God to gain control over the natural and spiritual world in the hemisphere, which—according to them—had fallen into the hands of the Devil. At a discursive level, Jesuits promoted their campaign as a “spiritual conquest,” which often targeted native healers and spiritual leaders that held fast to their own religions in the face of European colonization. In order to contextualize these medical encounters within the western history of science and medicine, this study takes a critical look at Jesuit missionary representations of healers and spiritual leaders in colonial Brazil and Mexico, particularly in the field of medicine. In fact, the appropriation of native

advent of the printing press as an important social and technological change that altered trends in European natural philosophy. Stemming from the renaissance of fourteenth-century intellectual life in Italy, they find that, “[t]he single most important factor [in the development of early modern medicine via “exotic” curiosities] was probably the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European voyages of exploration, to Africa, to Asia, and ultimately to the ‘New World’ of America, which yielded wonder on top of wonder. Many of these new marvels had never appeared in ancient or medieval texts; whether reported, depicted, or physically collected, they quickly overflowed the traditional confines of erudition and of medical pharmacological inquiry to demand empirical study in their own right” (*Wonder and the Order of Nature* 136). These observations lend important insight into the larger audience that the Jesuits would have courted through their tales of curiosities and exotica from missionary frontiers around the world. For a more detailed account of the significance of “innocent curiosities” according to St. Ignatius, see chapter 3 in which I unpack Acosta’s philosophy on the parameters of scientific discourse in the broader context of early modern Jesuit theology.

⁴ On the contribution of Iberian Jesuits to the history of science and medicine, see Andrés I. Prieto, *Missionary Scientists: Jesuit Science in Spanish South America, 1570-1810*.

knowledge of *materia medica* represents a significant portion of Jesuit writings from the Americas. As Jesuits archived these exchanges, they were often quick to demonize indigenous healers and spiritual leaders as “sorcerers.” In many instances, missionaries used this rhetoric as a tactic to usurp the power and authority that native leaders commanded among local communities.

Central to this exchange is the paradox that plays out in colonial contact zones:⁵ as they investigate the natural world, missionaries rely on the very people that they demonize to provide useful information on the practical application of local flora and fauna. This dissertation seeks to illuminate that paradox by dedicating three chapters to early modern Jesuit writings on American nature, in particular their ambivalent engagement with Amerindian “sorcery.” I dedicate chapter 1 to an analysis of Jesuit missionary letters from Brazil, which I read alongside Loyola’s epistolary theory for the Company of Jesus. In chapter 2, I analyze Portuguese Jesuit Fernão Cardim’s appropriation of indigenous botanical information in his scientific treatise, known today under the title *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil* [*Treatise on the Land and People of*

⁵ Mary Louise Pratt (*Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*) defines contact zones as social spaces determined by asymmetrical power relations, which are constantly negotiated and mediated in order to adapt to new colonial realities of domination and subjugation (6-7). José Rabasa incorporates this concept into his own study (*Writing Violence on the Northern Frontier*), although he goes on to specify that his use of the frontier, “seeks to foreground a geographic area that was written about, imagined, and mapped from a colonial perspective, rather than a natural entity that was discovered, known, and charted” (21). Inherent to Rabasa’s epistemological critique against the naturalization of European colonial discourse is the recognition that, “[w]riting codifies legal categories such as criminals, insurgents, deviants, and insubordinates, and legitimizes violence against these groups” (22). In this study, we see this phenomenon at work as the Jesuits used a discourse of sorcery to codify Amerindian healers and spiritual leaders as the colonial “other,” justifying their “spiritual conquest” throughout the hemisphere.

Brazil] (1583-1601). In chapter 3, I highlight the way in which Jesuit missionary networks systematically worked to conquer the Americas on a broad scale, by analyzing the Company of Jesus' spiritual politics in colonial Mexico through a critical reading of Spanish Jesuit José de Acosta's *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* [*Natural and Moral History of the Indies*] (Sevilla 1590).

As Jesuit missionaries surveyed the Americas for natural resources ripe for European harvest and exploitation, it warrants mention that certain medicinal plants circulated in European trade networks while others did not. The case studies of New World plants that I present here demonstrate the way in which Jesuits Christianized American nature in order to make it more amenable to European consumption and commodification, though Europeans did not find all plants fit for "Christian" use. In several instances, missionaries determined that certain plants could not be divorced from their satanic nature (i.e. *Christianized*) and, therefore, were condemned. In this fashion, Jesuits tried to regulate plant use based on the religious politics that arose at the juncture of ritual, healing power, and spiritual authority in colonial missions. Jesuit representations of "demonic" plant use afford insights into why missionaries valued some medicinal plants while they denigrated others, despite the potential medicinal value that these diverse plants represent. What becomes clear in this investigation is that magic, medicine, and religion are inextricably linked in early modern encounters throughout the Iberian Atlantic world. In the following sections, I provide a general overview of the scholarship to date that informs this research.

Iberian Science and Medicine: Literature Review

Recent scholarship in the history of science and medicine highlights the role that early modern Iberian empires played in the Scientific Revolution of the seventeenth century.⁶ Prior to this point, general trends focused on the British and Dutch contributions to the methodological and theoretical reforms to natural philosophy during the period, overshadowing the significance of Iberian contributions to the history of science and medicine. This is, in large part, a residue of the Black Legend, which diminished and degraded Iberian intellectuals as inferior to their Western-European counterparts to the north.⁷ Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra and Benjamin Breen outline new directions in the field

⁶ To this end Maria M. Portuondo's scholarship on Spanish cosmography—and its contact with the America—uncovers the central position that Iberian scientists occupied in the advancements of early modern natural philosophy (*Secret Science*). She finds that, "Each new *relación* and pilot chart, each new letter from the Indies and new account of discovery, presented the cosmographer with a difficult epistemic problem that required the development of new methods for firmly establishing matters of cosmographical fact. To this end they designed new ways of collecting and organizing knowledge and developed ways to test the validity of the information, all the while ensuring that new facts served utilitarian purpose" (299). As Portuondo's research demonstrates, Iberian scientists were at the forefront of scientific exploration in the Americas. Competing imperial powers coveted this information, which Iberians tried to hold under lock and key. Also a pioneer in the field, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra's *How to Write the History of the New World* provides a postcolonial reading of the role of the Americas in the history of science and medicine through the Enlightenment; also see his book *Nature, Empire, and Nation* for a revisionist take on the role of Spain and Spanish America in the development of early modern and nineteenth-century science and medicine. Daniel Bleichmar, Paula De Vos, Krisitin Huffine, and Kevin Sheehan also put together an indispensable volume for this line of investigation, *Science in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, 1500-1800*, with contributions from leading scholars in the field, including, Antonio Barrera-Osorio's essay "Knowledge and Empiricism in the Sixteenth-Century Spanish Atlantic World" (219-32) and David Goodman's "Science, Medicine, and Technology in Colonial Spanish America" (9-34).

⁷ The Black Legend refers to a propaganda campaign that northern European powers waged against Iberian imperialism, denigrating Iberians for their cruel conquest of the Americas thereby justifying their own right to intervene in the hemisphere. For a closer

in their article “Hybrid Atlantics: Future Directions for the History of the Atlantic World,” including a “focus on local contingencies, cultural exchanges, extra-national groups, indigenous perspectives, and the roles of nonhuman actors like objects, environments, and ecologies” (599). The study that I present here on Jesuit missionary encounters with Amerindian healers and spiritual leaders contributes to this turn in the history of Iberian science and medicine, a field that is in flux as new scholarship reveals the role of Iberia and the Americas in the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment in western Europe.

While colonial botany⁸ reached its height during the eighteenth-century Enlightenment,⁹ sixteenth-century natural histories laid the ideological groundwork that justified the unequal ecological exchange between Europe and the Americas, particularly in the realm of *materia medica*. Lorraine Daston and Katherine Park highlight the

look at how the Black Legend played out in the early modern Atlantic world, see chapter 2. On the legacy of the Black Legend well into the Enlightenment, see Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*, 132-3.

⁸ On the “colonial politics of botany,” see Schiebinger and Swan, *Colonial Botany*, 3-6. They argue that, “Variations on the relations between colonial governance and botanical practices abound in the early modern period. There are as many sorts of colonial botany as colonies, in the sense that different state structure or companies deployed or produced differing modes of scientific practice. Colonial botany developed along with a web of trade routes and was informed by patterns of commerce and naval prowess that kept them open” (6). Regarding the contributions of Iberian science and medicine in this anthology, see, Bleichmar, “Books, Bodies, and Fields: Sixteenth-Century Transatlantic Encounters,” 83-99; Schiebinger, “Prospecting for drugs: European Naturalists in the West Indies,” 119-33; Lafuente and Valverde, “Linnaean Botany and Spanish Imperial Biopolitics,” 134-47; and Cañizares-Esguerra, “How Derivative was Humboldt?,” 148-68.

⁹ On the significance of sixteenth-century natural history in the Hispanic Enlightenment, see Bleichmar, *Visible Empire: Botanical Expeditions and Visual Culture in the Enlightenment*, 12.

significance of early modern medical inquiry in *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, in which they find that,

The voyages of exploration and conquest coincided with, and partly fueled, an increasingly focused and programmatic movement to reform the field of *materia medica*, which gathered momentum from the 1490s on. This movement, which began in Italy but quickly caught on elsewhere in Europe, initially centered around editing, assimilating, and criticizing the works of Greek and Roman writers on medicine and natural world like Aristotle, Dioscorides, and Pliny. But the reformers quickly realized that they needed to supplement these texts with their own experience and practical use. (148)

For Jesuits writing during the early modern period, the genre of natural history emerged as a dominant generic form in the documentation of the types of scientific developments that they “discovered” via their own observations on American nature.

Brian Ogilvie (*The Science of Describing: Natural History in Renaissance Europe*) traces some of the larger exchange networks that inform the production of these histories to understand how natural history developed as an independent discipline; he finds that,

No longer limited to a small group of physicians, apothecaries, medical students, humanists, the community of naturalists included collectors great and small, served by gardeners, cabinetmakers, illustrators, and other artisans who did much of the hard work that went into building and

maintaining a collection. But with the very growth of natural history came differentiation and divergence within the community. (46)

However, Ogilvie largely ignores Spanish and Portuguese writers' contribution to these endeavors, claiming that these larger communities excluded Iberian naturalists.

Additionally, while Daston and Park provide an exhaustive overview of the role that curiosity and wonder played in the development of western science from medieval Europe through the Enlightenment (specifically in relation to the emergent centrality of ocular experience in early modern scientific advancements), the contribution made by Iberia is largely overlooked in their research.

In response to the exclusion of the Spanish empire, Cañizares-Esguerra has produced significant scholarship to debunk the Protestant myth that the Scientific Revolution excluded Iberian naturalists.¹⁰ Antonio Barrera-Osorio also points out the central role that the Spanish empire played in the revision of antiquated understandings of the nature of the earth and the cosmos in his study of American nature (*Experiencing Nature*). This role, he argues, resulted from the epistemological ruptures provoked by new information from the Americas, which in turn challenged European medieval and humanistic conceptualizations of natural philosophy and geography. According to Barrera-Osorio, the onset of the fracturing of the previously established episteme is a result of empirical advancements made by the burgeoning Spanish Empire of the sixteenth century.

¹⁰ In addition to his article "Hybrid Atlantics: Future Directions for the History of the Atlantic World" with Benjamin Breen, see also Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World and Nature, Empire, and Nation* and his "Introduction" to *Science in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires*, 1-5.

Moreover, within the context of Iberian science and medicine, it is necessary to highlight the central role that the Company of Jesus played, specifically through their collection of information in the Americas. In the case of the Portuguese Atlantic, Palmira Fontes Da Costa and Henrique Leitão provide a historiographical overview of Portuguese imperial science to highlight the impact of Jesuit intervention in the field in their essay in the anthology *Science in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires, 1500-1800*. They describe the scientific practices of Portugal prior to the Jesuits as “[s]omewhat loose channels of communication and practice of science” that were restructured and systematized by the Company of Jesus (“Portuguese Imperial Science” 41). Regarding the role of the Jesuit missionary scientists, Fontes Da Costa and Leitão also find that:

The formation of networks of information and the processes of diffusing knowledge were crucial to the development of Portuguese colonial medicine and natural history [...] until the second half of the eighteenth century the Jesuits played a pivotal role in the circulation of European and indigenous information relevant to medical and natural historical practices. (51)

Andrés I. Prieto (*Missionary Scientists: Jesuit Science in Spanish South America, 1570-1810*) has similarly highlighted the role of the Jesuits in Spanish America and finds that, “[t]he institutional features of the order (particularly its commitment to education and its efficient postal system) allowed the circulation of information thus gathered and the forging of lasting collaborative relationships between Jesuits stationed on both sides of the Atlantic” (228).

Prieto details missionary medical encounters in the case of Spanish South America in his study of the first Jesuits in Chile. In these encounters, Jesuit relations with local *machis* (Mapuche healers and spiritual leaders) proved to be the most valuable as well as the most tenuous. According to Prieto, the *machis* regularly stood in opposition to Jesuit evangelization, citing Christian baptism as “a lethal spell cast on them by the missionaries” (41). Although Jesuits saw local *machis* as an obstacle to their mission, they also depended on them for their medicinal knowledge. Prieto’s research shows that,

Faced with these problems, the Jesuits tried to diminish the influence of the *machis*—and, at the same time, legitimate themselves as the true mediators between the worldly and spiritual spheres—by applying a more subtle strategy [over a defensive war against the *machis*]. On the one hand, the Jesuits tried to control and limit the natives’ recourse to their traditional medical-religious practices. On the other hand, the missionaries simultaneously tried to gain access to the botanical and medical information that would enable them to displace the *machis* from their influential positions as healers within the communities. (48-9)

Prieto also points to Jesuit mission settlements, and the ritual of confession more specifically, as fundamental to the Jesuit acquisition of medical knowledge. Historically, Jesuit missionaries relied on indigenous informants to provide essential information on the hidden virtues of American nature, which they incorporated into larger scientific discourses circulating in Europe at the time.

Missionary scientists dedicated much of their study to indigenous medical knowledge specifically because, as Kelly Wisecup contends in *Medical Encounters: Knowledge and Identity in Early American Literatures*, “medicine was a form of power for many people who encountered one another in the New World, and medical knowledge and practices offered a system with which these individuals situated themselves in challenging new natural, spiritual, and sociopolitical worlds” (7). Wisecup studies the texture of cross-cultural communications embedded in colonial medical encounters in early British American literature to highlight native and African agency in their contribution to the field of medicine, which she understands to be central to knowledge and identity formation in the early Americas.¹¹ In these encounters between Amerindians, Africans, and Europeans, she finds that:

Medical communications—such as explanations of disease and their causes, healing ceremonies or rituals, and decisions to rely on certain medical authorities—established one’s spiritual and sociopolitical status in several contexts. In cross-cultural encounters, one could present an explanation or a cure for illness to indicate that he or she possessed a special relationship to the non-human forces that caused disease; in this way, one could signal a corresponding ability to influence the course of

¹¹ Wisecup defines texture in the context of colonial medical encounters as “the narrative fragmentation and formal inconsistencies that signal colonists’ transcriptions of Native and African knowledge and the influence of that knowledge on colonial writing” (*Medical Encounters* 197). She goes on to write that, “Texture offers scholars an opening through which to consider the deep literary histories of early America, histories that do not simply include Native and African paradigms and communications but that take account of how colonial literatures were actively shaped by Natives’ and Africans’ perspectives and actions” (199).

disease. (4)

As Wisecup shows, European health specialists did not wholly dominate the field and recognized Amerindian and African healers as powerful adversaries. Wisecup's scholarship demonstrates that medical writing in colonial British America was informed by transcultural exchanges between native, African, and European approaches to medicines and diseases, which, in turn, made a significant impact on medicine in the Old World. Not only is this the case of British America, but it also rings true for colonial medical encounters on a hemispheric scale, given the rapid spread of European epidemic disease throughout the Americas and the need for medicines to treat them. For this reason, Wisecup argues that medical knowledge—and the way it was accessed, administered, and controlled—is key to understanding the construction of identity and power in colonial America at large.

This project's study of missionary encounters with Amerindian healers and spiritual leaders in colonial Brazil and Mexico contributes to current research in the field, such as Prieto's research on Spanish South America and Wisecup's investigation into medical encounters in British Americas. As we expand the purview of colonial science and medicine to a hemispheric context, it becomes apparent that European colonists and missionaries systematically mined Amerindian sources for information on necessary medicines and foodstuffs to support their colonization efforts. In the case studies that I present from Brazil and Mexico, Jesuit missionaries' engagement with indigenous groups also yielded insights into local healing rituals and natural medicines. Those insights

revealed a rich botanical history of local pharmacopeia, which proved to be valuable on transatlantic markets. The Jesuits incorporated their study of indigenous medicine into a long-standing European tradition of scientific philosophy, a tradition that continues to devalue indigenous power and knowledge.¹²

As Jesuits extracted indigenous knowledge of natural medicines, certain rhetorical patterns emerged in their writings. The Jesuit discourse of sorcery, for example, worked to systematically condemn indigenous ways of knowing, despite the fact that this knowledge was significant for advancements in scientific knowledge production in the Western European tradition. This discourse, of course, was not homogenous. In many cases, Jesuits demonized specific Amerindian healers and spiritual leaders, targeted because they opposed missionary intervention, while they admired others for their specialized knowledge of the curative properties of plants, animals, and insects. This logic—to both demonize indigenous ways of knowing, but then appropriate this knowledge for its practical use—is the foundation for the colonial ambivalence that characterizes Jesuit missionary correspondence from the Americas at large. Beyond the use-value of the American natural world, the Company of Jesus would also profit

¹² In his discussion of colonial historiography, Rabasa (*Writing Violence of the Northern Frontier*) makes this point, arguing that: “Spain’s colonial project inaugurated a form of modern imperialism that constituted Western civilization as a paradigm to be imposed on the rest of the world. These political corollaries reveal power relations that were first exerted in the sixteenth century but are still in full force today. They imply a postcolonial perspective that allows us to critique the culture of conquest informing developmentalist policies and their implementations through military force—these, obviously, always under the guise of love and truth or, in the lingo of today, as advancing democracy” (95). The epistemic violence that colonial writings enact against indigenous peoples that Rabasa notes here is the lynchpin of early modern European writings.

economically from their distribution of medicine throughout their global network of missionaries.

In the introduction to the anthology *Science in the Spanish and Portuguese Empires*, Cañizares-Esguerra points to the central role that plants played in European imperial expansion.¹³ Daniela Bleichmar also highlights the link between natural history, medicine, and European economies to signal that, “Interest in New World nature was inextricably linked to interest in its commercial exploitation. Political domination, profitable trade, and competition among European powers were the starting points for the colonization of the natural world” (“Books, Bodies, and Fields” 83). This was certainly true in the case of sixteenth-century Jesuit missions in Brazil and Mexico, as Jesuit natural histories on the Americas effectively worked to enumerate potential commodities in the New World. In this sense, Jesuit missionary correspondence from the Americas illustrates the mercantilist drive that motivated many Iberian writing subjects in the early modern Atlantic. As Jesuit discourse on the Americas demonstrates, the representations of raw materials found in maps, letters, and natural histories of the New World were fueled by a desire to conquer, exploit, and dominate American landscapes for European gain. We see this, for example, as Portuguese Jesuit Fernão Cardim writes that Brazil is already “um novo Portugal” [a new Portugal] (*Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil* 57).

Along these lines, José de Acosta’s *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (1590) highlights Spain’s naval capacity to ship large quantities of valuable botanicals from the

¹³ In this introduction, Cañizares-Esguerra concludes that, “Cosmography and natural history were the backbone upon which the Portuguese and Spanish crowns built their mighty Christian monarchies. The systematic gathering of information, plants, and curiosities and indigenous knowledges was a trademark of both empires” (1).

West Indies back to Spanish ports. Acosta reports that, “Para medicina también se trae la cañafistola, la cual se da copiosamente en la Española, y es árbol grande, y echa por fruta aquellas cañas con su pulpa. Trajéronse en la flota en que yo vine, de Santo Domingo, cuarenta y ocho quintales de cañafistola” (213-14) [*Cassia fistula* is also brought for medicinal purposes; it grows abundantly in Hispaniola and is a large tree, and produces those canes, along with their pulp, as its fruit. Forty-eight hundred weight of cassia was brought in the fleet in which I came from Santo Domingo (222)]. He goes on to write that, “La zarzaparrilla no es menos conocida para mil achaques; vinieron cincuenta quintales en la dicha flota de la misma isla” (214) [Sarsaparilla is no less known for its many uses: fifty hundredweight came in the same ships from the same island (222)]. In addition,

El palo de Guayacán, que por otro nombre dicen Palo Santo o Palo de las Indias, se da en abundancia en las mismas islas, y es tan pesado como hierro, y luego se hunde en el agua; de éste trajo la flota dicha, trescientos y cincuenta quintales, y pudiera traer veinte, y cien mil, si hubiera salida de tanto el palo. (214)

Guayacán wood, also called holy wood or Indies wood, grows in abundance on the same islands, and is heavy as iron, and quickly sinks in water; the fleet I have mentioned brought 350 hundredweight and could have brought 20,000 or even 1,00 if there were a market for so much wood. (222-223)

Acosta also documents the presence of brazilwood in the same shipment: “Del palo del Brasil, que es tan colorado y encendido, y tan conocido y usado para tintes y para otros

provechos, vinieron ciento y treinta y cuatro quintales de la misma isla, en la misma flota” (214) [One hundred and thirty-four hundredweight of Brazil wood, which is bright red in color and so well known and employed in dyes and other uses, came from the same island on the same fleet (222-23)]. *Cassia fistula*, sarsaparilla, *Guayacán* and brazilwood: this is just a small sample of the exploitable and exportable natural abundance that Acosta documents for his contemporary readers interested in the West Indies.

To understand the larger implications of the mercantilist discourse that underwrites Jesuit natural histories from the Americas, we can turn to Mary Louise Pratt’s *Imperial Eyes* as she critiques European travel and exploration writings in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Pratt argues that, in their study of nature, Europeans developed a new “planetary consciousness” in which,

One by one the planet’s life forms were to be drawn out of the tangled threads of their life surroundings and rewoven into European-based patterns of global unity and order. The (lettered, male, European) eye that held the system could familiarize (“naturalize”) new sites/sights immediately upon contact, by incorporating them into the language system. (31)

While Pratt focuses on the latter portion of the colonial period, this “imperial eye” was also present in Jesuit missionary correspondence from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The Iberian crowns invested heavily in the cataloguing of the American natural world, which, by the eighteenth century, fueled their drive to try to exploit indigenous lands throughout the hemisphere. Such tasks required extensive information gathering on

the part of the emerging European powers, which led to the institutionalization of empirical mechanisms (political, economic, and scientific) in order to meet these ends.

In the context of the British Atlantic, Mary Campbell (*Wonder and Science*) points to the important intersection between European imperial expansion and the study of American nature and finds that, “The scientific study of colonized territories has generally absorbed natural history into the more immediate plot of commercial exchange, of nature as transformable into product” (55). We see these same trends in Jesuit natural histories focused on the abundance of natural resources in the Americas, ripe for European exploitation, set alongside narratives of the limitless potential to convert pagan souls. In this sense, religious conversion and imperial expansion go hand in hand, working together to control and convert American plants, people, and practices into European profits and Christian alms. European imperialists rationalized their colonization based on their religious duty as Christians as well as their geo-politically determined right to conquer all “barbarous” nations from the seat of “civilization.” For his part, David M. Livingstone (*Putting Science in its Place*) argues that:

To understand the *history* of medicine, or religion, or law, then, we must necessarily understand the *geography* of medical, religious, and legal discourses. It is critically important to pay attention to those sites that have generated learning and then wielded it in different ways. At every scale, knowledge, space, and power are tightly woven. (11)

Livingstone’s argument here lends significant insight into the geopolitics of scientific authority in Euro-Amerindian medical encounters. For example, as my analysis of

Acosta's and Cardim's natural histories of the Americas demonstrates, power and knowledge are interwoven in their texts, as the Jesuit missionaries reimagine and write the Americas into a physical, epistemic, and spiritual hierarchy that placed Christian Europe at the moral and economic center of the globe thereby granting Europeans the right to colonize and the Jesuits the right to wage their "spiritual conquest."

As we see in Jesuit discourse, missionaries justified their right to extract native medicinal information based on European claims to superiority in society and religion. With regard to the way in which knowledge, space, and power are negotiated on a symbolic level, Rolena Adorno (*The Polemics of Possession*) views colonial writing as a social practice by which early modern subjects worked to adapt, negotiate, or defend Spanish domination in Latin America; in this sense, "These works do not describe events; they *are* events, and they transcend self-reference to refer to the world outside themselves" (4). Adorno goes on to explain that, "This referentiality, however, is not historical, as in the historical truth whose referent is a past event. It is instead rhetorical and polemical, with the objective of influencing readers' perceptions, royal policies, and social practices" (4). In the case of Jesuit natural and moral philosophy, we see this type of symbolic possession at play as missionaries mined indigenous informants for medical information at the same time that they denied them the intellectual agency to possess this knowledge, using them as objects of inquiry into the American natural world.

The colonial encounter between Europe and the Americas in the year 1492 would change the organization of the global system permanently. Immanuel Wallerstein (*World-Systems Analysis*) identifies this moment and the following century as foundational with

respect to current socio-economic manifestations at a global scale. According to Wallerstein, these global relations are governed by a capitalist logic informed by colonial relations, which resulted from the transatlantic encounter between Europe and the Americas.¹⁴ The colonality of power and knowledge is a concept that has been developed by Aníbal Quijano and adopted by Walter Mignolo in his theory of colonial difference.¹⁵ Mignolo understands the colonality of power and knowledge as a social

¹⁴ In another study on the origins of the European world economy specific to the early modern period Wallerstein (*Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World Economy in the Sixteenth Century* 1974) argues that, “There are no clear and easy lines to draw, but I think it most fruitful to think of the sixteenth century European world as being constructed out of the linkage of two formerly more separate systems, the Christian Mediterranean system centering on the Northern Italian Cities and the Flanders-Hanseatic trade network of north and northwest Europe, and the attachment to this new complex on the one hand of East Elbia, Poland, and some other areas of eastern Europe, and on the other hand of the Atlantic islands and parts of the New World” (68). Richard H. Grove (*Green Imperialism* 1995) finds Wallerstein’s interventions helpful but argues that he fails to recognize the multiple centers at play in the larger Atlantic system. In his own work, Grove gestures to the same shift, but refers to it as a new ecological world order and explains that: “For the purposes of the environmental historian, Wallerstein’s conceptualisation of the mode of growth of the ‘global’ European economies can be of some assistance in explaining the consequences of capitalist growth on the relative pressures and rates of ecological change at ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ of a notional ‘European world system’ during a ‘long sixteenth century’ between 1500 and 1680. However, it is basic form this model is now increasingly being seen as insufficient to explain the relatively autonomous economic and ecological transformations that were taking place in this period, largely outside of the European orbit. The evolution of early merchant capitalism had many more centres than Wallerstein imagined, and episodes of ecological transformation (insofar as they can be related to the impact of capital formation) may be closely related to this multi-centredness” (61).

¹⁵ See Mabel Moraña, Enrique Dussel, and Carolos A. Jáuregui, “Colonialism and its replicants,” *Coloniality at Large*: “As Aníbal Quijano has shown in his studies, the political and philosophical thought emerging from colonialism ‘invented’ *race* as the pivotal notion that supported the process of world classification. Situated as one of the axes of modernity, the issue of race became the ‘rationale’ used to support, justify, and perpetuate the practice of imperial domination. As Quijano noted, *race* emerges as a key category to define and justify colonial arrangements and to ‘legitimize’ the system of forced labor in the New World. The concept of *coloniality*, a term coined by Quijano,

hierarchy that differentiates between *who* has the authority to possess knowledge and *who* serves as the object of study to obtain said knowledge, a distinction that Europeans justified based on geographical differences.¹⁶ In this sense, Amerindian healers and spiritual leaders are differentiated and objectified as the colonial “other” based on these geo-political assumptions.

As Europeans worked to colonize the Americas, they depended on the international law of the Doctrine of Discovery¹⁷ to justify their claims to Amerindian lands and natural resources, as well as their enslavement of natives and Africans in pursuit of their particular brand of settler colonialism. By 1494, Spain and Portugal both signed the Treaty of Tordesillas in response to shifting lines of demarcation designated by the papal bulls *Inter caetera* and *Inter caetera II*. The treaty represented an agreement between the two Iberian powers that would grant Portugal the right to colonize part of the Americas while Spain would have jurisdiction over the remaining sphere. It is necessary, then, to understand Jesuit narratives of “spiritual conquest” in the Americas as part and parcel of a larger system of European economic interests in American natural resources,

facilitates an understanding of how race and labor were articulated in the colonial period—a subject often neglected in postcolonial studies—and of its perpetuation in modern times” (9).

¹⁶ See Mignolo, “The Geopolitics of Knowledge,” *Coloniality at Large*, 228-30.

¹⁷ In their article “Brazil, Indigenous Peoples, and the International Law of Discovery,” Robert J. Miller and Micheline D’Angelis find that, “The Doctrine is the international law principle that European countries and settlers used to make legal claims to own the lands, assets, and human rights of indigenous peoples all over the world in the fifteenth and through twentieth centuries. The Doctrine provided that newly arrived Europeans automatically acquired specific property rights in the lands of indigenous peoples, and various sovereign, political, and commercial powers over them without their knowledge or consent” (1-2). For a look at European rituals of possession, see Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe’s Conquest of the New World*.

governed by the geopolitics of knowledge and power established through Western imperial expansion. In other words, Europeans discursively possessed native plants, people, and practices in their natural histories of the Americas, which they philosophically justified as their natural right because of the “barbarity” and “idolatry” that they ascribed to native nations.

As they worked to Christianize American people, plants, and places, Jesuit missionaries would have to engage with Amerindian healers and spiritual leaders—who they labeled as “sorcerers”—in order to understand the hidden virtues of American nature. Missionaries, in particular, dedicated much of their investigation to local *materia medica*, as their knowledge in this area proved to be a central strategy in their conversion techniques. To illuminate the metaphorical tight rope that early modern theologians walked as they engaged with medicine through religion, the next section shows how a seventeenth-century Jesuit natural philosopher from Spain, Hernando de Castrillo, worked within the limits of Church-sanctioned scientific discourse in his study of natural magic and medicine. An analysis of Castrillo’s treatise on the science of occult philosophy highlights the role that the study of pagan magic played in Jesuit investigations into medicine in their missionary work throughout the globe.

Magic, Medicine, and Jesuit Theology

In the early modern period, Jesuit theologians understood magic and medicine as related fields that could be studied through the teachings of occult philosophy (i.e. the hidden virtues of nature); it is necessary to note, however, that missionary scientists

understood certain forms of magic/medicine as “natural” while they categorized others as “demonic.” Contrary to modern notions of science and medicine, occult philosophy often operated at the forefront of scientific innovation in the early modern Atlantic world.¹⁸

Jesuit natural philosophers and missionary scientists, in particular, were large contributors to these developments. The Spanish Jesuit Hernando Castrillo’s treatise *Historia, y magia natural, o ciencia de filosofia oculta, con nuevas noticias de los más profundos misterios, y secretos del Universo visible, en que se trata de animales, pezes, aves, plantas, flores, yervas, metales, piedras, aguas, semillas, parayso, montes, y valles* [History and natural magic or science of occult philosophy, with new news of the most profound mysteries, and secrets of the visible universe, in which animals, fish, birds, plants, flowers, herbs, metals, stones, waters, seeds, paradise, hills, and valleys are considered] (Madrid, 1649) is one example of the place that natural magic and occult philosophy held in Jesuit scientific discourse.¹⁹ Castrillo defines natural magic as

¹⁸ William R. Newman and Anthony Grafton emphasize the connection between the occult and science in their anthology *Secrets of Nature: Astrology and Alchemy in Early Modern Europe* in which they call for new material “to dispel the myopic stereotypes that have come to dominate the study of the occult sciences since its revival in the 1960s” (30). Valerie Flint also points to the interrelated nature of magic and science in her study *The Rise of Magic in Early Medieval Europe*. She states that: “Magic and science are, of course, very old enemies, and it will always be the aim of science, in the sense in which we generally understand the term, to eliminate the irrationality and the mysteries of magic. There is a time, however, when the two can and do walk together” (7). Also see Richard Keickhefer, “The Classical Inheritance.” *Magic in the Middle Ages*, 19-42.

¹⁹ In addition to Castrillo’s *Historia y magia natural*, the writings of Jesuit philosopher Juan E. Nieremberg in his *Curiosa y oculta filosofia* [Curious and Occult Philosophy] (1633) serve as further evidence that the occult sciences were a topic of discussion for the Jesuits as they formulated their own brand of Aristotelian natural philosophy, albeit an issue of debate in intellectual circles and different religious orders throughout Europe. Jesuit Martín Del Rio, in contrast, focused on the inner workings of demonic magic, which culminated in his influential treatise *Disquisitiones Magicae* (1608). The

universal knowledge, “[p]orque se estiende à las cosas sobrenaturales, y divinas...”
[because it extends to supernatural and divine things] (1).²⁰

In this sense, natural magic is the study of “the most profound mysteries and secrets of the visible universe,” as Castrillo states in the title of his scientific treatise. The natural magic that Castrillo discusses here is influenced by Neoplatonic philosophy, which seeks to understand the hidden virtues of nature’s secrets.²¹ Castrillo’s philosophical approximations regarding the natural world are based on the Christian notion of a hierarchical chain of being, with God at the top of the pyramid in the celestial sphere, followed by humans, animals, and plants and minerals in the sublunar realm.²² Nature, in this cosmological frame, was God’s great book, governed by the syntax of the Divine Order. Castrillo positions himself as an apologist for natural magic—not to be

manuscript was written in Latin, which restricted the work as a tool for his community of religious intellectuals.

²⁰ All translations from Castrillo’s *Historia, y magia natural, o ciencia de filosofia oculta* are my own.

²¹ Carolyn Merchant (*The Death of Nature*) defines this philosophy as, “a hierarchical cosmic structure [that] assumed that earthly changes were influenced by the celestial heavens and could be produced artificially by the human manipulation of natural objects in which these influences inhered” (105). She goes on to find that, “At the basis of Neoplatonic hierarchical magic, therefore, was a causal chain linking elemental and celestial objects and making it possible for bodies above the terrestrial sphere to affect and alter those on earth” (107).

²² On early modern assumptions regarding the structure of the earth and the cosmos, Príncipe (*The Scientific Revolution*) explains that, “When early modern thinkers looked out on the world, they saw a *cosmos* in the true Greek sense of that word, that is, a well-ordered and arranged whole. They saw the various components of the universe tightly interwoven with one another, and joined together in a complex web of connections and interdependencies, its every corner filled with purpose and rich meaning. Thus, for them, studying the world meant not only uncovering and cataloguing facts about its contents, but also revealing its hidden design and silent messages” (21).

confused with black magic—as he argues that certain inquiries into occult philosophy did not violate Church doctrine.²³

For Castrillo, natural magic—or good, Christian magic—is acceptable because it is divinely ordained. Despite his endorsement of natural magic, however, Castrillo does make sure to note that, “[S]an Gerónimo dividió la Magia en blanca, y negra...” [San Gerónimo, divided magic into white and black] (1). The division that the early Church made between natural and demonic magic continued well into the medieval and early modern periods, though the boundaries between the two fluctuated over time and space depending on Church regulations. Castrillo’s discourse on occult philosophy from the seventeenth century defends natural magic as “un arte, ò facultad, que obra con virtud natural cosas insólitas, y maravillosas, que exceden la común opinión, è ingenio de los hombres” [an art, or faculty, that works with great virtue unusual and marvelous things that exceed common opinion and ingenuity of men] (1). In contrast with the moral misgivings that he associates with black magic, Castrillo’s understanding of natural magic as the “ingenuity of men” and a “natural way of knowing” is the continuation of a long-standing medieval tradition that places magic, science, and religion under the larger umbrella of European natural philosophy. In this vein, natural magic served as an invaluable branch of scientific inquiry; in fact, Castrillo writes that, “[e]l arte magica es

²³ David C. Goodman highlights the centrality of the occult science in Phillip II’s reign (*Power and Penury*). In a critical look at the treatment of the occult in the sixteenth century, Goodman points to Caro Baroja’s *Vidas mágicas e Inquisición* as a turning point in the field of Iberian studies, given that Baroja’s study, “who has demonstrated the widespread participation of Spaniards in occult practices, well-intentioned and otherwise” (2). Previously scholars had asserted that magic and occult philosophy did not have the same place in Iberian society as their neighbors to the north.

absolutamente Ciencia, que procede en gran parte con principios evidentes, alcançados à conocer con la observación, y experiencia, que suele ser madre de la ciencia” [magical art is absolutely Science, that proceeds in great part with evident principles, knowledge that is reached with observation, and experience, which is usually the mother of science] (53).

While this line of defense for natural magic was not universally accepted, it represents a vision shared by many natural philosophers that contributed to the larger paradigm of the history of magic in Western Europe, a point that Richard Keickhefer makes in *Magic in the Middle Ages*. According to his research, natural magic “[w]as the science that dealt with ‘occult virtues’ (or hidden powers) within nature” (9). Keickhefer goes on to point out that black magic, in contrast, was understood as a perversion of natural magic, “It was religion that turned away from God and toward demons for their help in human affairs” (9). Valerie Flint’s research corroborates these assertions and adds more broadly that: “Magic may be said to be the exercise of a preternatural control over nature by human beings, with the assistance of forces more powerful than they” (*The Rise of Medieval Magic* 3). Based on these definitions, we can understand magical acts as the transference of supernatural power, channeled through natural conduits—such as animals, fish, birds, plants, flowers, herbs, metals, stones, waters, and seeds—to manifest a desired result on earth. That is, while natural and black magic both depend on otherworldly powers for effectiveness, the distinction between the two varies on the basis of the *source* of that power, i.e. whether God or the Devil fueled it.

Because of its intimate connection with nature, magic was inherently linked to the study of medicine, a discipline devoted to discovering the healing power of herbs, plants,

stones and minerals. Castrillo writes that, “Esculapio, y Hipocrates, Padres de la Medicina, fueron magos, como dize Pico Miran, y que se ayudaron de la Magia natural, para ser tan eminentes Medicos; porque como dize Plotino:²⁴ *Natura minister Magus*” [Aesculapius, and Hippocrates, Fathers of Medicine, were magicians, as Pico Miran says, and that they were helped by natural Magic, in order to be eminent Medics; because as Plotinus says: Nature aids the Magician] (54). With regard to the relationship between the magician and the medic, Castrillo goes onto write that:

El Mago es instrumento de la naturaleza de las cosas, èl la dà à conocer al Medico; y por esso Zamoxis llamava à la Magia natural, suma de la perfeccion de la Medicina; y Plinio dize que es la mas alta, y sagrada Medicina ... y es sin duda, que la Medicina, por ser perfecta ciencia, tiene singularissima necesidad de la magia natural, y del conocimiento de las naturalezas de las cosas; porque si el Medico las ignora, mal podrá aplicar las que convienen para los efectos de la salud que pretende. (54-5)

²⁴ Plotinus is known as the founder of Neoplatonism (third century of the Common Era). According to Keickhefer (*Magic in the Middle Ages*), “In his *Enneads* Plotinus explains both magic and prayer as working through natural sympathetic bonds within the universe. Beings on Earth are linked with each other and with the heavenly bodies in an intricate, living network of influences” (27). Keickhefer goes on to point out that, “Many early Christian thinkers, such as Augustine, wrestled with Neoplatonic philosophy and derived much inspiration from it, but had little use for such notions and practices as these. Certain Neoplatonists of medieval Europe were fascinated by the notion of the cosmos as a great, harmonious, living organism, but not by Plotinus’ theory of prayer and magic. It was only in the fifteenth century that humanist proponents of Neoplatonism rediscovered Plotinus and again argued for this conception of magic” (27). In the case of Castrillo’s defense of natural magic and occult philosophy, he is largely drawing from this latter trend of Neoplatonic thought.

The Magician is an instrument of the nature of things, he gives knowledge to the Medic; and for this Zalmoxis called natural magic the sum of the perfection of Medicine; and Pliny says that [natural magic] is the highest and most sacred Medicine ... and it is without a doubt, that Medicine, by being perfect science, has the very singular necessity of natural magic, and of knowledge of the nature of things; because if the Medic ignores them, he might poorly apply [natural things] that are profitable for the health effects that he treats.

Here, Castrillo explicitly defends natural magic as the base for the study of medicine. In this context, magic and medicine are related fields in that they both seek to find the hidden properties of nature.

Castrillo also points to the magician as an invaluable tool for the Christian study of nature, despite the potential moral ambiguity of the magician's pagan roots. This did not mean, however, that Christian natural philosophers interested in medicine unilaterally adopted pagan magic without reform; it was first necessary to Christianize pagan knowledge to then be able to incorporate it into Church-sanctioned scientific discourse.²⁵ As Christian philosophers inquired into the inner workings of magic and medicine, they were bound by theological principles that limited the scope of scientific exploration. At times, their adoption of Greco-Roman models pushed the limits set by the Church, given that certain ideological premises within the pagan tradition contradicted its very foundation. Castrillo's take on natural magic was primarily informed by Aristotelian

²⁵ See Prieto, "Christianizing Demonic Knowledge," *Missionary Scientists*, 62-90.

natural philosophy that had been Christianized, first through Augustinian theology and then via St. Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* (1265-1274).²⁶

Stephen Gaukroger (*The Emergence of a Scientific Culture*) understands this sort of ideological rapprochement as the "Aristotelian philosophy/Christian theology amalgam," spearheaded by St. Augustine in antiquity and then continued by Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas in the medieval period (49-59). On the Aristotelian amalgam, Gaukroger points out that:

As did Averroes [a medieval Islamic philosopher from Al-Andalus], Aquinas recognised philosophy and theology as autonomous disciplines. The difference is that whereas for Averroists these disciplines might proceed in quite different directions and might remain unreconciled, for Aquinas they must be bridged. But the solution did not lie in a synthesis of the Augustinian kind. That was no longer an option outside the Platonist tradition: Augustinian theology was formulated within Neoplatonic terms, taking a Neoplatonic conception of the divinity and 'Christianizing' it, whereas Christianized Aristotelian metaphysics had to start with a

²⁶ Sixteenth-and seventeenth-century Jesuit ideology was built upon ancient Greco-Roman epistemology, which had been reworked by their medieval forbearers. As Margaret J. Osler (*Reconfiguring the World: Nature, God, and the Human Understanding from the Middle Ages to Modern Europe*) points out "These books and ways of thinking came to early modern Europe by linguistically and geographically circuitous routes, and both underwent major changes in the process" (3). Her chapter on "The Western View of the World before 1500" outlines the way in which texts and knowledge traveled the Mediterranean world from Greek writings, through Arabic translations, and into Latin (3-29). These processes were, of course, complex and could vary greatly depending on text and context, though a general frame such as this lends insight into the general spread of knowledge from east to west via linguistic and geographic channels.

Neoplatonically formulated Christianity and reshape it as best it could. It was a mixture, or at best an amalgam, with an internal balance that was much more delicate than anything in the Augustinian synthesis. (77)

In Castrillo's case, he depended on the Aristotelian/Christian amalgam in his own philosophical interventions on natural magic, which we can understand in Gaukroger's terms as a "Neoplatonically formulated Christianity." Gaukroger goes on to explain that:

Aquinas' mentor, Albertus Magus, offered a conception of philosophy as a discipline that achieved something different from theology, since philosophy is concerned with natural truths and theology with supernatural ones, and he defended the idea of philosophy as something which, within theologically determined limits, could be pursued for its own sake. This formed the basis for Aquinas' attempt to keep separate foundations and sources for Aristotelian philosophy and Christian theology, but given this, to attempt to reconcile them in the form of an Aristotelian/Christian amalgam. (77)

Castrillo's take on natural magic is a significant example of the way in which theology and philosophy were reconciled into a unified whole whereby investigations into natural philosophy were conducted within the bounds of Christian theology. While certain pagan scientific premises contradicted Church authority, this does not imply that Castrillo and his fellow Christian natural philosophers dismissed the tradition as heretical and, therefore, useless. On the contrary, even though the source might be ungodly, the knowledge itself, in the right hands, was still valuable; the key for Christian natural

philosophers was to adjust pagan knowledge and practices to fit within the dogmatic parameters set by the Church.

In the context of the colonial Americas, the distinction between pagan and Christian knowledge was complicated further, which we see in the Jesuit-authored natural histories that incorporate Amerindian knowledge into the Western European tradition. In their writings, Jesuits systematically demonized Amerindian healers and spiritual leaders as “magicians” or “sorcerers,” while they simultaneously depended on them as “an instrument of the nature of things,” as noted by Castrillo. By this logic, the role of the magician is to provide Christian natural philosophers with local knowledge of the natural world. For example, Castrillo points to the “false priests” from the province of Camaná in the Arequipa region of present-day Peru, where, “[l]os Sacerdotes falsos llamados Piaches, que eran magos, con el culto de los fingidos Dioses, aprendían juntamente el arte de curar, el conocimiento de las yervas, y de sus virtudes naturales” [The false priests called Piaches, who were magicians, with the cult of the fake Gods, also learned the art of healing, knowledge of herbs, and their natural virtues] (54). Just as was the case of the “Piaches” in Arequipa, native healers and spiritual leaders served as the guardians of medicinal knowledge throughout the Americas.²⁷ For this reason, Jesuit missionaries paid

²⁷ As E. Jean Matteson Langdon notes (“Shamanism and Anthropology”), “In all its expressions, the one role that is constant in these shamanic systems is that of healer. It is essential to all because health is viewed holistically. In the native perspective, it is intimately concerned with the energy forces that lie behind well-being, and well-being is not only the absence of sickness, but implies nutritional, economic, and social wellbeing for the community as well as for the individual. Illness is an expression of conflict, a disturbance of the psychosocial and ecological balance of the group. In the global conception of the world, these concerns cannot be separated from the extrahuman world that influences daily event” (*Portals of Power* 16).

close attention to their use of plant-based medicines and, as a result, indigenous medicine people served as significant sources as Jesuit missionaries sought to uncover useful flora and fauna in colonial settlements.

Spanish Jesuit Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, one of Castrillo's main sources on South America, documents his own interactions with Guaraní magicians and sorcerers in his *La conquista espiritual del Paraguay hecha por los religiosos de la Compañía de Jesús en la provincial de Paraguay, Paraná, Uruguay y Tape* [*The Spiritual Conquest Accomplished by the Religious of the Society of Jesus in the Provinces of Paraguay, Paraná, Uruguay, and Tape*] (1639). In his section on the customs of the Guaraní people he writes that:

Las supersticiones de los magos se fundan en adivinaciones por los cantos de las aves, de que han inventado muchas fábulas, en curar y con embustes, chupando al enfermo las partes lesas, y sacando él de la boca cosas que lleva ocultas, mostrando que él con su virtud le ha sacado aquello que le causaba la dolencia, como una espina de pescado, un carbón o cosa semejante. (80)

The superstitions of the magicians are based on divination by bird songs, about which they have invented numerous fables, as well as on fraudulent treatments of the sick: the magician sucks the affected part and then, extracting from his mouth items he had concealed there, shows that by his

power he has removed the cause of the person's illness—a fish bone, a coal, or the like.²⁸ (51)

While Montoya writes this particular case off as “fraudulent treatments of the sick,” he goes on to note that, in the case of deadly snakebites, “Usan de muchos remedios y yerbas que ha dado allá la naturaleza. La piedra de San Pablo es muy probada, ajos majados bebidos, piedra bezar y yerbas” (50) [The people use numerous remedies and herbs that nature has provided there. St. Paul's stone is a tried and true remedy, garlic is pounded and drunk, bezoar stones and herbs are used (32)]. For Montoya, however, “el más casero es el fuego, fogueando con un cuchillo ardiendo la parte lesa polvoreada con azufre. Este remedio es conocido, y acudiendo con tiempo no peligran” (50) [the homeliest remedy is fire; they powder the affected part with sulphur and purge it out with a glowing knife. The remedy is well known and if it is applied in time the person is in no danger of death (32)].

Montoya also notes other possible remedies that he finds among the Guaraní, which require “[l]a cabeza de la misma víbora majada y puesta sobre la picadura, [lo que] mitiga el dolor y chupa la ponzoña. Los hígados comidos usan por remedio” (50) [the snake's own head, mashed and placed on the wound, [which] lessens the pain and sucks out the poison. The livers are also eaten as a remedy (32)]. In addition to their ability to heal, Montoya finds that some magicians and sorcerers among the Guaraní also have the ability to do harm:

²⁸ All translations into English from Ruiz de Montoya's original text are from The Institute of Jesuit Sources' edition of *The Spiritual Conquest*, (trans. C.J. McNaspy, S.J.).

Los peores y más perniciosos son los enterradores, cuyo oficio es matar, enterrando en la casa del que desea matar algunas sobras de su comida, cáscaras de fruta y pedazos de carbón, etc. A veces entierran sapos atravesados con alguna espina de pescado, con que se va enflaqueciendo el que desean matar, y sin otro accidente muere, de que hemos visto muchas veces efectos conocidos. Averigüé de algunos que el demonio en figura de un negrillo se les aparecía con un cesto en la mano, incitándoles que fuesen a enterrar; y en una pieza donde nunca faltaba gente de día ni de noche, hallamos más de trescientos hoyos y sepulturas de cosas que el demonio les había dado. Y deseando uno destos matar con estas cosas a un Padre, le respondió el demonio, que no tenía fuerzas contra aquellos religiosos. (90)

The worst and most pernicious are the buriers. Their trade is killing. In the house of a person they want to kill they bury leavings from his meal—fruit skins, pieces of charcoal, etc. They sometimes bury toads with fish bones stuck through them; this slowly debilitates the person they want to kill and he dies without any other accident. We have many times seen this happen unmistakably. Regarding some I learned that the devil would appear to them as a little black man with a basket in his hand, urging them to go bury. In a room where people were present day and night we found more than three hundred holes and burials of items that the devil had given them. When one of these men wanted to kill one of the Fathers by such

means, the devil replied that he was powerless against these religious.

(51)

Despite Montoya's claim that the Devil was powerless against the missionaries, early modern Europeans generally understood supernatural forces as invisible agents with the power to shape human experience on earth. For this reason, the need to mitigate Satan's power was of grave concern for the Catholic Church.

As part of their larger strategy to control access and authority to the practice of magic, Jesuit missionaries worked diligently to institutionalize certain philosophical, theological, and juridical discourses that targeted oppositional forces most susceptible to the Devil's influence: "magicians" and "sorcerers." In doing so they were able to justify the "spiritual conquest" that they waged against the Devil's agents in the Americas. Ultimately this rhetoric was used to criminalize native medicine people who refused to convert to Christianity. Thus, as the branches of magic, medicine, and religion intersect in Catholic society, it is important to recognize that the pursuit of science cannot be disengaged from the religious politics of the day. In her contribution to *Discovering Reality: Feminist Perspectives on Epistemology, Metaphysics, Methodology, and Philosophy of Science*, Ruth Hubbard makes the observation that, "Science is made by people who live at a specific time in a specific place and whose thought patterns reflect the truths that are accepted by the wider society" (45). In this sense, science is a social construction to some degree, which is evident in the charged language that early modern scientific authorities used to generate prescriptive understandings of the relationship between humans, science, and God. Hubbard, for example, goes on to say that,

[a]ll acts of naming happen against a backdrop of what is socially accepted as real. The question is *who* has social sanction to define the larger reality into which one's everyday experiences must fit in order that one be reckoned sane and responsible. In the past the Church had this right, but it is less looked to today as a generator of new definitions of reality, though it is allowed to stick by its old ones even when they conflict with currently accepted realities (as in the case of miracles). ("Have Only Men Evolved?" 46)

Certainly in the case of the early modern period, scientific discourse was inextricably tied to Church institutions, universities in particular, which had the power and authority to discriminate between what was considered good or bad magic.

In the case of colonial Brazil and Mexico, this was tied to a larger geo-political debate on scientific authority and identity politics in missionary encounters with native healers and spiritual leaders, as they investigated the value of American nature. The power to name and classify people, plants, and practices as "natural" or "demonic" in the context of the early modern Atlantic world became an important tool for Jesuit missionaries in their "spiritual conquest," which specifically targeted Amerindian healers and spiritual leaders. Moreover, Jesuit representations of the abundance that characterizes American nature is indicative of the overwhelming drive that motivated Iberian imperial expansion to exploit and dominate via colonial settlements in the hemisphere. In the following section, I outline the strategic significance of the Americas for the Company of Jesus as missionaries waged their religious company's campaign throughout the globe.

Strategic Missionary Positions in Colonial Brazil and Mexico

The Company of Jesus would play an important role in the Counter-Reformation Church, particularly in the propagation of its ideology throughout the globe, given its privileged position within Iberian imperial projects.²⁹ Furthermore, Jesuit exchange networks, both of knowledge and goods, transcended imperial boundaries, allowing them to share privileged information among the Company regarding American nature. The transnational element of the Company of Jesus sometimes proved problematic for Iberian monarchs, who worked to protect this information from competing imperial powers. Knowledge of the land and people of the Americas was coveted by European empires as they looked to expand their colonial settlements. In this sense, Jesuit missionaries formed part of a larger imperial project to study American plants to unearth their potential exchange-value as commodities on transatlantic markets, whether they were medicines, foodstuffs, or luxury items.³⁰

²⁹ See Luis Millones Figueroa's and Domingo Ledezma's "Introducción: los jesuitas y el conocimiento de la naturaleza americana" for an in-depth look at the significance of humanistic training and education for the Company of Jesus (*El saber de los jesuitas*, 10-24).

³⁰ Daston and Park (*Wonders and the Order of Nature*) find that, "Well into the sixteenth century, topographical marvels and the exotic products of both East and West kept their princely associations and their aura of romance; they continued to represent wealth, nobility, and colonialism – this last increasingly a matter not of aspiration but of fact... The European luxury market expanded to include not just gems and spices, but new commodities such as tobacco and short-lived slaves of unfamiliar physiognomy and hue. These new wonders eventually wrought great changes in European culture, not only its economy and its political order, but also in its interpretation of the natural world" (108).

For the Company of Jesus, colonial Brazil and Mexico represent significant sites for the spiritual harvest of pagan souls ripe for conversion in addition to a wealth of natural resources necessary to facilitate their “spiritual conquest.” Jesuit natural histories from colonial Brazil and Mexico read as conversion manuals and guidebooks for the study of American nature and people. As Jesuits constructed a general body of knowledge on native rites and traditions as well as localized understandings of nature via natural histories, they created an invaluable tool for conversion and colonial settlement. In large part, Jesuit missionaries were interested in local medicines and foodstuffs to support their efforts at colonial settlement. Whether a settlement was religious in scope or economic in design—or, both, as in the case of Jesuit missionary settlements—understanding the people, as well as native flora and fauna, and their local uses was paramount to the vitality of colonial settlement and evangelization.

As I have indicated, the Company of Jesus played a central role in the development of colonial science via their institution of a transnational network of agents strategically placed throughout the East and West Indies. Steven J. Harris’s “Confession-Building, Long-Distance Networks, and the Organization of Jesuit Science” highlights the prolific nature with which Jesuits wrote scientific texts on the study of nature throughout the early modern period. In this study, he addresses the “paradox of Jesuit Science,” which he associates with the question as to

[w]hy a religious order so often associated with the conservative agenda of the Catholic Counter-Reformation—and directly implicated in the condemnation of heliocentrism and the recantation of Galileo—could at

the same time be so successful in nurturing and sustaining a tradition of scientific scholarship within its own ranks. (288)

As Jesuits worked to gain new knowledge of nature, Harris highlights the role of confession as a tool for information gathering. Moreover, the ability of the Order to circulate information and goods on a global scale had a significant impact on the emergence of scientific culture in early modern Europe. This is largely due to the fact that missionary observations on the ground proved invaluable to their European counterparts due to their contact with local populations. In light of their dedication to humanist education and their extensive production of scientific treatises, it is necessary to recognize the Jesuits as key players in the development of western science and medicine in the early modern period.

As we consider the contribution of Jesuit missionary scientists to the history of science and medicine, it is necessary to contextualize their respective interventions within the canons and decrees of the Council of Trent (1545-1563). The Council of Trent, a monumental assembly in the development of the Counter-Reformation Church, convened for the first time in 1545 to address attacks waged against the Church by Martin Luther and fellow Protestants. In the American natural histories written by Jesuits, we find a particular version of this Counter-Reformation ideology as missionaries were forced to adapt the findings of the council to missionary concerns in colonial settlements abroad. For the missionary, one of their main challenges was to relay important information regarding the natural world as well as indigenous practices and beliefs in order to build a general body of knowledge regarding conversion techniques. The accounts and assertions

that we find among Jesuit writings were often a measured version of their experience in international missions; this was particularly important as they narrated their encounters with pagan “sorcerers.”

In his chapter on “Science and Catholicism in the Scientific Revolution, 1550-1770,” Richard G. Olson points out that, “[T]he Jesuit Order found ways to promote scientific activity that were technically within the bounds of doctrinal conformity, but which certainly stretched the boundaries of officially allowed discourse” (*Science and Religion* 58). In other words, in the context of the Protestant Reformation and the Catholic Counter-Reformation, science was sticky business for natural philosophers and theologians alike; this meant that, for Jesuit missionaries, it was important that they align personal observations and experiences with a theology of science that did not lead them astray from the limits imposed by Catholic doctrine.³¹ In the case of the medicinal information that they gleaned from “diabolic” rituals in Amerindian healing traditions, missionaries had to choose their words carefully so as not to record heretical information

³¹ See Edward Grant, “The Partial Transformation of Medieval Cosmology by Jesuits in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries,” in which he explains that, “Between 1543 and 1611, the most basic concepts of medieval cosmology came under attack. These attacks fall under two categories. In the first category, arguments derived from Copernican astronomy were directed against the medieval belief in the centrality and immobility of the earth. Arguments in the second category were directed against the traditional Aristotelian concept of an incorruptible and unchanging celestial region and against the well established belief in the existence of hard celestial orbs” (128). With regard to the positions of the Jesuits, and Catholics more broadly, Grant goes to find that, “[a]ttacks against traditional medieval cosmology in the first category were effectively forbidden by the condemnation of the Copernican theory in 1616. Assaults against celestial incorruptibility and hard orbs in the second category were in no way offense to Church dogma or tradition. Thus, in the first category it was incumbent on Jesuits to uphold traditional Aristotelian doctrine, but in the second they could agree to disagree with traditional views” (*Jesuit Science and the Republic of Letters* 127-8).

for posterity and to maintain the theological integrity of Church-sanctioned discourse.³²

To read missionary representations of Amerindian healers and spiritual leaders “against the grain” in light of the dogmatic restrictions that informed their writings, I begin chapter 1 with an interrogation into the cognitive operations behind the Jesuit impulse to impose Christian beliefs and practices in sixteenth-century Brazil, a period that marks the initial contact between Tupi/Tapuia societies and European colonists and missionaries. My interest here is to explore the ambivalence that infuses Jesuit narratives of local healers and spiritual leaders, as the latter attempted to negotiate and, at times, resist Portuguese colonization in the face of major epidemic crises, which prompted intense social change for native communities. Despite the fact that much has been lost from the history of pre-contact populations and their healing practices, the Jesuit discourse of sorcery provides a window onto indigenous medicine and healing rituals, albeit incomplete and biased. What becomes clear is the way in which Jesuits vacillate in their evaluation of indigenous knowledge and healing practices, as they demonize Tupi/Tapuia belief systems to discredit native healers, while they are quick to extract the

³² See Reff, *Plagues, Priests, and Demons*: “All members of native society apparently were privy to the spirit world. The Jesuits nevertheless indicated or implied that certain individuals, often referred to as “sorcerers” (*hechiceros*), acted as intermediaries for other members of the community. As noted in the previous chapter, early Christian authors were reluctant to elaborate on the “sorcery” of European shamans or *magi*, owing to their conviction that doing so was potentially dangerous. The Jesuits were similarly uncomfortable talking about Indian shamanism, which was understood as more than hocus-pocus. When a missionary was called to an Indian home because a *hechicero* purportedly made the house tremble, the priest did not scoff at the messenger but quickly grabbed his prayer book and hastened to do battle with Satan. The Jesuits believed that God, in his infinite wisdom, allowed Satan supernatural powers, which could be tapped by sorcerers or those duped the ‘evil one’” (152-53).

medicinal and cultural information embedded within these structures to further the goals of the mission. Thus, through a critical reading of Jesuit letters, we begin to uncover the space of power that native spiritual and health specialists occupy in their communities, which Jesuit missionaries sought to appropriate as they waged their “spiritual conquest” to save native souls from the Devil.

I dedicate chapter 2 to a study of Portuguese Jesuit Fernão Cardim’s *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil* (1583-1601) to highlight the role of indigenous informants in providing local medicinal knowledge for missionaries, who used this information to gain spiritual power and authority over native communities. As I demonstrate in this chapter, local medical knowledge became a necessary tool for conversion, proving indispensable to the missionary’s quest to “liberate” natives from Satan’s grip. Because of these pursuits, Cardim’s writings give us significant insight—though incomplete and through the lens of empire and religious dogma—into contact-era kinship systems, mythological structures, and local medicinal plants. This chapter also traces Cardim’s manuscript through the Atlantic world—as it was stolen by English corsairs, sold on the London book market, and then translated and incorporated in Samuel Purchas’ encyclopedic volume of travel narratives *Hakluytus Posthumous or Purchas His Pilgrimes* (1625)—to highlight the tensions between European inter-imperial rivalries, as major European powers raced to acquire the information necessary to commodify American nature for European consumption through trade-based expansion. As this chapter demonstrates, Jesuit missionaries played a central role in reconnaissance missions in the Americas in an effort to produce documents that might provide useful information regarding native

people and lands. The pirating of Cardim's manuscripts also goes to show that this information was coveted in and across early modern European empires.

María M. Portuondo makes this point in her book *Secret Science: Spanish Cosmography and the New World*, noting that, "The earliest descriptions of the land and its people only opened the floodgates to new questions about the nature of the New World. What did this new world contain? Where did these lands lie in relation to Europe? Who lived there? Were they like us or different?" (1). Beyond mere curiosities, Portuondo shows that the answers to these questions were, in fact, desired by European empires; the "first" to arrive on the scene, the Spanish kept the cosmographical information that they acquired at the *archivo de los secretos* [archive of secrets], housed at the Council of the Indies, the institution designated to protect this type of knowledge gathered by Spanish cosmographers. Despite the due diligence that this institution was designed to provide, information began circulating beyond its control. As it turns out, the Company of Jesus—operating outside of and through multiple empires during the early modern period—proved to be one of the main leaks, as evinced by the case of Portuguese Jesuit Fernão Cardim's stolen manuscripts on the land and people of Brazil at the hands of English corsairs (1601).

Had Cardim's manuscript not been stolen by English pirates, he would have gone on to publish and print his work in the same vein as Spanish Jesuit José de Acosta, the subject of chapter 3. In this chapter, Acosta's *Historia natural y moral de las Indias: En que se tratan de las cosas notables del cielo, y elementos, metales, plantas y animales dellas y los ritos, y ceremonias, leyes y gobierno, y guerras de los indios* [Natural and

Moral History of the Indies: In which the most notable things of the sky, and metal elements and their animals and rites, and ceremonies, laws and government, and wars of the Indians] (Sevilla 1590) serves as an important counterpart to Portuguese Jesuit Fernão Cardim's work in Brazil. Acosta represents one of the most cited Jesuit authorities on the Americas from the colonial period, and for this reason, the juxtaposition of Acosta and Cardim's work helps to illuminate the systematic approach taken by the Company of Jesus in their pursuit for souls and science not only in the Americas but also throughout the Order's larger missionary network.

Both Cardim and Acosta were part of a global strategy adopted by the Company of Jesus to catalogue and classify the land and people of missionary outposts in Asia, Africa, and the Americas.³³ And, just as Cardim wrote a natural history of the land and people of Brazil, Acosta was compelled to do the same for New Spain and South America; that is, “[d]ar noticia de las costumbres y hechos de estas gentes, y en lo natural de aquellas tierras y sus propiedades, con la experiencia de muchos años y con la diligencia de inquirir, y discurrir y conferir con personas sabias y expertas...” (13-14) [write of the customs and deeds of those people and of the natural phenomena of those lands and their characteristics, with the experience of many years and my diligence in

³³ Agustín Uldías finds that, “The path opened up by Acosta was followed by many Jesuits who reported their observations of the newly discovered American lands – or the ‘New World’ as they called it – and thus became the first naturalists and geographers” (“Naturalists, Geographers, and Explorers” 109). He goes on to explain that: “With time Jesuit naturalist studies became more numerous, but each was limited to a particular region. Only those of Acosta and Cobo are of a general character. In 1549 the first Jesuits arrived in Brazil. The Portuguese Fernão Cardim (1549-1625) was one of the first to write about the nature of this land in his *Do Clima e terra de Brasil* [About the climate and land of Brasil], 1585)” (112).

inquiring and discussing and conferring with learned and expert persons (9)].³⁴ In fact, Jesuit missionaries—writing from outposts throughout the early modern Iberian empires—produced extensive scientific treatises based on colonial botany. But first, we must turn to their missionary correspondence—the subject of the next chapter—in order to set the stage for a critical reading of Jesuit writings on medicine and healing in colonial Brazil and Mexico.

³⁴ All Spanish citations from Edmundo O’Gorman’s edition of Acosta’s *Historia natural y moral* while all of the quotations in English are from Frances. M. López-Morillas’ translation of Acosta’s *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*.

Chapter 1

Jesuit Power Struggles in Colonial Brazil: Sorcery, Spiritual Authority, and Smallpox

In the case of Portuguese imperial expansion in Brazil, the Company of Jesus operated in conjunction with the Crown's colonial interests and served as the driving force behind settlement and conversion beginning in 1549. As they "reduced" Brazilian natives into colonial settlements, the Jesuits created new cross-cultural contact zones among Europeans, Africans, and Tupi and Tapuia indigenous groups.³⁵ Sixteenth-century Jesuit letters reveal that given the swiftness of smallpox outbreaks along the coast in the second half of the sixteenth century, encounters among Jesuit missionaries and local Amerindians were often structured around an urgent need to care for the sick. In this context, Jesuit missionaries worked tirelessly to be the first on the scene to provide physical and spiritual "remédio" [remedy] and "consolação" [consolation] to ailing individuals. In addition to military might,³⁶ the Jesuits found that they would also need to

³⁵ In Spanish, Jesuit missions are referred to as *reducciones*. Missionaries found that, if they were able to isolate potential indigenous converts within the bounds of the mission, their conversions efforts might be more effective. Moreover, within the colonial period, Jesuit missions might offer natives protection from colonists' campaigns to round up "Indians" to trade and enslave them on their plantations.

³⁶ Both Nóbrega and Anchieta, Jesuit leaders throughout the mission in Brazil, supported the use of coercive conversion if necessary. Dauril Alden (*The Making of an Enterprise: The Society of Jesus in Portugal, Its Empire, and Beyond, 1540-1750*) finds that: "The

acquire the cultural capital and power necessary to serve as healers and spiritual leaders among Tupi and Tapuia people if they were to sustain the Order's interests in Brazil. In this capacity, they were careful to observe and, at times, document the role of indigenous healers and spiritual leaders, as they performed important magico-religious rituals to maintain the overall wellbeing of their communities. In their quest to stamp out Satan, Jesuit missionaries wrote letter after letter with details of the struggles that they faced as a result of the oppositional force that Tupi and Tapuia healers and spiritual leaders played throughout the colonial period. In this chapter, I analyze how Jesuit missionaries used a discourse of sorcery to denigrate native healers and spiritual leaders that opposed their missionary agenda.

As Kathryn McKnight points out in her essay "Colonial Religiosity: Nuns, Heretics, and Witches," the diabolical categorizations applied to non-European ritual specialists worked to discursively disqualify and marginalize healers outside of the Western European tradition (197-209). Given that these categories were linked to the devil, the classification of the non-European medicine person in this light effectively worked to place Amerindian and African healers and spiritual leaders on the dark side of a binary of good and evil constructed by European colonizers. As a result, McKnight argues that it is necessary that contemporary critics approach these categories with a critical eye:

Fathers' early confidence in their ability to remold the character of the aborigines by example and persuasion evaporated in the face of the Brasis resistance to continued intrusions by white settlers upon their fishing and hunting grounds and to the settlers' practice of enslaving Indians needed for their burgeoning sugar plantations" (72).

To Europeans, witchcraft implied a relationship with the devil and often named the antagonism between Catholic colonizers and those Amerindians and Africans who practiced non-Catholic religions. Colonizers did not apply these terms in an entirely arbitrary fashion, as Spaniards brought with them the pagan-Catholic practices of European witchcraft, and soon specialists of all social groups engaged with each other, producing complexly transculturated phenomena. Authorities applied the terms of European witchcraft to practices that brought Europeans, Amerindians, and Africans together, and bore similarities to practices the Inquisition had prosecuted in Europe. Modern scholars are complicit in the colonizers act of “othering” when we adopt the terms “witch” and “witchcraft” uncritically. (204)

This is not only true in the case of witchcraft in Spanish America, as McKnight has shown, but is also true of the discourse of sorcery perpetuated by the Jesuits in Brazil, who used these terms—*feitiço/feiticeiro/feitiçaria* [spell/sorcerer/sorcery] in particular—to categorically demonize the healing practices and social rituals of the *pajé* and the *caraíba* (i.e. native healers and spiritual leaders).³⁷ Furthermore, the Jesuits portray them

³⁷ Although Europeans often times failed to make a clear distinction between the *pajé* and the *caraíba*, for the indigenous, the social positions of these two types of healers and spiritual leaders did have a marked difference. Unfortunately, much of the specific linguistic and social history has been lost due to etymological oversights and homogenization on the part of European writers. While, generally speaking, both the *pajé* and the *caraíba* can be likened to the contemporary term *xamã*, or shaman, I choose to refer to these individuals as healers and spiritual leaders to specify their significant social role they played in their local communities. The complexity of the role of the *pajé* and

as a threat to the evangelical mission because they promote fear of the missionaries among the natives.

According to William Pietz, the word “fetish” derives from the words *feitiço*, *feiticeiro*, and *feitiçaria*, which were first applied to West African culture by Portuguese colonists and missionaries in the fifteenth century.³⁸ In his study, Pietz reveals that the notion of the fetish goes beyond rhetorically charged categories linked to idolatry and superstition, and was criminalized not only on theological grounds but also by European legal code.³⁹ Pietz makes a significant observation about the application of the terms idolatry and sorcery within this discourse, as he polemicizes the origin of the idea of the fetish:

In the early Portuguese voyage accounts, *idolatria* and *feitiçaria* often appear as distinct but paired terms characterizing the superstitious practices of black African societies. While the religion of heathen black peoples was automatically termed “idolatry” by medieval Christians, the greater descriptive accuracy of *feitiço* over *idolo* for characterizing the

the *caraíba*, pre and post conquest, is explored in further detail through the case studies presented later on in this chapter as well as in Chapter Two.

³⁸ Pietz’s argument that the notion of the fetish—prior to its nineteenth-century adoption by Marxist and Freudian social theories of commodities and human sexuality—is linked to Portuguese colonialism in West African in the fifteenth century has been widely accepted by scholars across disciplines; see, “The Problem of the Fetish, I” and “The Problem of the Fetish, II: The Origin of the Fetish” (*Anthropology and Aesthetics*). As we see in the case of Brazil, this same rhetoric was applied to non-Christian healers and spiritual leaders in an attempt to criminalize non-Christian practitioners based on religious convictions.

³⁹ Some of the first anti-witchcraft laws on the books in Portugal were promulgated by King João I; the legislation, known as “Dos Feiticeiros,” first appeared in 1385, and then again in 1403.

sacramental objects of African religion as *feitiçaria* led in time to the classification of African as *feitiçaria* rather than *idolatria*. The use of a term meaning “witchcraft” to characterize the religion, and thus the principle social order, of an entire people was unprecedented. (“The Problem of the Fetish, II” 37)

As we see in Jesuit missionary correspondence from the Americas, this discourse of sorcery was used across religions and geographies to label the spiritual “other” as demonic. Just as was the case in Africa, the terms *feitiço/feiticeiro/feitiçaria* were used in Brazil to register pejorative connotations of dark magic within Christian imaginaries structured by Catholic values. In effect, Jesuits implemented these loaded signifiers to strategically degrade spiritual healers and their practices in their quest to eradicate acts committed against the faith. This is certainly the case for Jesuit missionaries writing from Brazil, who applied the familiar terms *feitiço/feiticeiro/feitiçaria* to the *pajé* and *caraíba* in an effort to challenge their spiritual power and medical authority among local communities.

As Jesuits described missionary activity in their reports for the Company of Jesus, as well as for any other political authorities that might have gained access to their letters and histories, they situated Tupi and Tapuia beliefs and practices within their own Christian view of the world. For example, Jesuit missionary letters from the 1550s demonstrate that the Jesuit discourse of sorcery worked to justify their “spiritual conquest” in Brazil in an effort to win over the souls for the Catholic Church. Through their contact with Amerindians in this process, they dramatically altered native kinship

structures and way of life through the spread of European-born diseases, with epidemic bouts of smallpox leading the charge. A critical reading of these letters reveals that the Jesuits represented local healers and spiritual leaders as *feiticeiros* [sorcerers] with the specific intent to both demonize and usurp their power, authority, and knowledge to heal in and around mission settlements.

In order to understand the complex cultural exchange implicit to this dynamic, I begin with an analysis of several letters written by Jesuit missionaries in the early stages of colonization (1550s-1580s) to explore the link between ritual, the power to heal, and competing discourses of spiritual authority. I conclude with António Vieira's 'Annua Da Provincia do Brasil ... do anno de 1624, e de 1625' [Annual from the Province of Brazil ... from the year of 1624, and of 1625] in which Vieira gives an account of the Dutch invasion of Bahia as well as details of the general state of Jesuit-held missions from the period. Vieira's annual letter from Brazil provides significant evidence to show that, as Jesuit missionaries worked to spread the word of God smallpox regularly followed in their wake, which continued to decimate native populations well into the seventeenth century. It is through a careful reading of Jesuit missionary correspondence that I work to unpack the role that the Company of Jesus played within the larger project of Portuguese colonization in Brazil, a process that dramatically altered everyday life for many Tupi

populations along the coast as well as for more interior-oriented Tapuia groups to the north.⁴⁰

As we begin our analysis of Jesuit power struggles in colonial Brazil, it is necessary to first highlight the role of regular epistolary correspondence among the Company of Jesus, which functioned as one of the primary modes of communication.⁴¹ St. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556), founder of the Company of Jesus (1540),⁴² describes the importance of the art of letter writing for the Order in his own letter “To Peter Faber” (Rome, 10 December 1542).⁴³ Faber was one of the first Jesuit priests ordained by Loyola and was serving as a missionary in Germany when Loyola crafted the epistolary theory that would come to drive the Jesuit Order; his letter to Faber was widely circulated among the Company’s larger network, which Loyola ultimately wrote in response to the negligence that he perceived on the part of the brotherhood in their epistolary duties. Loyola claimed that: “Everyone seems to have failed in this regard, and so a copy of this letter is being sent to all,” and he goes on to say that, “I can say in truth that the other night we counted the letters that we were sending out to various places and found that the

⁴⁰ For a detailed account of the diversity among pre-contact indigenous populations, see Couto, *A construção do Brasil*, 89-109.

⁴¹ This was part of a larger practice of information gathering, which Loyola institutionalized to establish a long-range exchange network among Jesuit missionary settlements throughout the globe. As evidenced by the large volume of Jesuit letters that makeup the national archive in Brazil, Jesuit missionaries were central to Portugal’s imperial project in the territory.

⁴² Pope Paul III recognized the Jesuit Order in 1540 through the papal bull *Regimini*; and, just nine years after their recognition by the Catholic Church, the Company of Jesus would dispatch their first round of six missionaries to Brazil at the bequest of the Portuguese Crown.

⁴³ See *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, 62-4.

number reached two hundred and fifty” (63-64). Finally, he concludes by advising his interlocutor that: “In case your memory fails, as mine does often enough, keep this letter before you, or some substitute reminder of it, while you are writing your principal letters” (64). If the vast archive of Jesuit letters from missionary outposts around the world is any indication, the brotherhood actively took Loyola’s recommendations into account.

Missionary letters were not only exchanged throughout the Atlantic world and beyond but also circulated locally among mission settlements. Missionaries on the frontier of Portuguese expansion in Brazil often lived in isolation from the rest of the brotherhood, as they struggled to maintain Jesuit-controlled strongholds along the coast. For this reason, written correspondence served as their primary and sometimes only contact with neighboring missionaries. In his book *Plagues, Priests, Demons*, Daniel T. Reff points to the reality of missionary isolation in the case of Northern Mexico, where individual Jesuits would spearhead missionary settlements on their own during the initial phases of contact. According to Reff,

Because of a shortage of priests, most Jesuit missionaries worked by themselves and only occasionally saw another priest, never mind a Jesuit superior. Physical separation as well as slow and imperfect communication meant that priests on the frontier often made decisions on their own. (32-3)

This type of isolation was common on the frontier of empires for many Jesuits throughout the Americas, including Brazil. Although some Jesuits were isolated from the rest of the

brotherhood, missions were often set up alongside plantation economies that had been in operation for nearly thirty years prior to Jesuit arrival in the territory.⁴⁴ It is via their letters to one another that they were able to operate as a united front, allowing them to share valuable information (as well as notes on their progress) that aided in the reduction of indigenous populations to mission settlements. In the following section, I take a closer look at the colonization of Brazil—and the role of the Jesuits in that imperial project—to understand the socio-religious tensions that operated at the intersection of medicine and spiritual authority in missionary encounters with the local *pajé/caraíba*.

The Oppositional Forces of the Native *Pajé/Caraíba*

The colonization of Brazil was different from that of much of Spanish America; in the cases of the vast empires of the Nahua peoples of Anáhuac and the Incas of Tahuantinsuyu, Spanish colonizers were able to make use of pre-existing social structures, which ultimately aided European efforts at settlement and conversion. Thus, the largely sedentary societies of the Nahua and the Inca were converted into the Spanish-dominated viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru. In contrast, however, the indigenous groups of Brazil operated as semi-sedentary populations at the time of the encounter. In fact, throughout the Americas, indigenous groups that were not localized in long-term settlements proved to be an obstacle for European colonization efforts. While there are many differences between Spanish and Portuguese interventions in the Americas, one

⁴⁴ See Alden, *The Making of an Enterprise*, 71-5.

thing that did remain the same throughout was the rampant spread of European diseases among susceptible Amerindian bodies. It is important to note that, in the case of the Portuguese colonization of Brazil, the effects of disease on native demographics were not immediate upon contact, as was true in the neighboring Spanish American colonial settlements. This is largely due to the fact that the Portuguese did not have a unified colonial mission until the 1550s. Along with renewed interest from the Crown, and with the help of zealous Jesuit missionaries, an increased European presence in the area resulted in waves of demographic devastation, primarily caused by smallpox outbreaks along the coast.

Throughout the colonial period, the Company of Jesus worked hand in hand with the Portuguese Crown to convert and colonize native populations. For this reason, it is important to situate Jesuit letters within the larger frame of Portuguese colonial expansion, which was both politically and economically motivated.⁴⁵ In the case of Portugal, Pope Leo X put into practice the *padroado régio* [royal patronage] in 1514, which granted the Portuguese crown spiritual jurisdiction over its territories at home and abroad. When Portugal decided to seriously pursue an active colonial agenda in Brazil (1549), the Crown would turn to Jesuit missionaries to lead the “spiritual conquest” in the territory. Prior to this point, the Crown tried to institute a privatized model of hereditary

⁴⁵ In his section on “The Beginnings of the Enterprise in Brazil” Alden (*The Making of an Enterprise*) confirms that: “Portugal claimed the territory of Brazil, which had been discovered by its second India-bound expedition in 1500, but did not attempt its formal occupation, defense, and exploitation of segments of the littoral to a group of captaincies. Its aims were to facilitate the agricultural development of the colony and to deny it to Portugal’s French rivals. Despite the successful introduction of cane sugar and the continued exploitation of timber, the dyewood known as brazilwood, and certain other commodities, the proprietary (captaincy) system was not a success” (71).

captaincies up and down the coast, a system that had been adapted from the implementation of sugar plantations in the fifteenth century on the island of Madeira (1420). Between 1533 and 1535, the King entrusted this task to Martim Afonso de Sousa, who was primarily responsible for the oversight of fourteen land grants sold to private entrepreneurs by the Crown; initially, local merchants and plantation owners dealt primarily in the trade of *pau-brasil* [brazilwood] and sugar. In the initial years, only ten of the fourteen *donatários* were maintained with moderate success, and only São Vicente and Pernambuco were successfully converted into colonial settlements.⁴⁶

Tomé de Sousa's voyage of 1549 marks the first attempt to de-privatize the colonization effort on the part of the Portuguese Crown, after Martim Afonso de Sousa's efforts did not yield the desired results. In an effort to neutralize indigenous resistance and lay claim to Brazilian natural resources, King João III ordered Tomé de Sousa to set up the first royal headquarters in the colony. In a royal letter (7 January 1549) he named Sousa governor-general for a term of three years, with an annual salary of 400,000 *reais*.⁴⁷ Sousa arrived in the Bahia of Todos-os-Santos on 29 March 1549: after his arrival, Salvador, Bahia, would become the first Crown-sponsored settlement in Brazil. It was for this reason that large-scale colonization and subsequent settlement—which involved regular shipments of European and African livestock, sugar cultivation, and slavery—did not go into effect until the 1550s.⁴⁸ Jesuit Father Manuel da Nóbrega was

⁴⁶ See Alida Metcalf, *Family and Frontier in Colonial Brazil: Santana de Paraíba, 1580-1882*, 31.

⁴⁷ See Jorge Couto, *A construção do Brasil*, 239.

⁴⁸ See Metcalf, *Go-betweens and the Colonization of Brazil*, 119-20.

enlisted to be part of Sousa's colonial project and led the first wave of six missionaries to the region in 1549. In conjunction with Sousa, the Company of Jesus instituted Jesuit reductions (*aldeias*) throughout the territory, and took responsibility for the spiritual indoctrination, overall wellness, and pacification of the natives. Subsequently, the Jesuits would play a foundational role in the colonization of Brazil, even more so than in the case of Spanish America.

The Company of Jesus's evangelization network reached transimperial dimensions during the early modern period and extended throughout Africa, Asia, and the Americas. Despite the vast span of this network, the brotherhood managed to stay connected via their *cartas particulares*; in fact, Jesuit missionaries were expected to detail the ecclesiastical administration of the Order's day-to-day business, as well as their projections and expectations for the future.⁴⁹ Regular correspondence was to be done in solidarity with the rest of the brotherhood, and also to provide insider information from the different locales throughout the Company. If we return to Loyola's letter "To Peter

⁴⁹ Alcir Pécora ("Cartas à segunda escolástica") is known for the work that he has done on Jesuit letters and he notes that: "A presença ostensiva da carta do corpo da Companhia evidencia que sua função está pensada ao menos segundo três aspectos decisivos: o da *informação*, o da *reunião de todos em um* e, enfim, o da *experiência mística* ou *devocional*" [The ostensible presence of the letter from the corpus of the Company gives evidence that its function operates according to three decisive aspects: that of *information*, that which *unites the whole in one*, and, lastly, that of *mystical* or *devotional experience*] (381).⁴⁹ Pécora goes on to explain that epistolary correspondence formalized the process of information gathering and sharing within the Order, and, above all else, served as a "rhetorical map in progress" of the Company's success rate for conversion (373). These insights reveal that not only did these letters serve to foster a global sense of community among the Order but they also represented a "mystical or devotional experience" (382).

Faber” (Rome, 10 December 1542), he explicitly outlines his instructions and expectations in terms of the Jesuits’ epistolary duties:

In the principal letter put down what each one is doing in the way of preaching, hearing confessions, giving the Exercises, and other spiritual activities, as God makes use of each for the greater edification of our hearers and readers. If the soil you are working be unproductive and there be little to write about, put down briefly something about health, your dealings with others, or such matters. Do not include irrelevant details but leave them for separate sheets in which you can write of letters received and the spiritual consolation they have given you, items of news, especially of the sick, business matters, and even some words by way of exhortation. (Loyola 62-63)

In addition to making Jesuit priests accountable for the ecclesiastical administration of the order—preaching, hearing confessions, giving the Exercises, and other spiritual activities—, the letters were also a valuable source of information regarding “items of news.”

More specifically, Loyola marks his own interest in missionary health care, and instructs the missionaries to take care to note matters of *health* and *sickness* in addition to business matters and other dealings of the Order. The emphasis placed on health and sickness by Loyola is particularly relevant in the case of Brazil given the fact that one of the most dramatic impacts of colonization on Tupi and Tapuia societies occurred on a

biological level. Scholars have long pointed out the demographic devastation that resulted from the transference of Old World disease to the Americas. Due to the geographic isolation of North and South America from Eurasia and Africa, indigenous populations had not yet been exposed to epidemic waves of smallpox, measles, influenza, scarlet fever, and yellow fever. In addition to these five major diseases, mumps, rubella, pneumonia, pertussis, anthrax, bubonic plague, malaria, and typhus also posed a threat.⁵⁰ The asymmetrical transmission of Old World pathogens in the Americas is a result of the genetic resistance that had been built up among the survivors of past waves of these epidemics in Europe.⁵¹ As a result, incidents of European contact with natives, and the spread of disease, resulted in a form of biological warfare that aided the Jesuits in their “spiritual conquest” of native populations.

According to Alida Metcalf (*Go-betweenes and the Colonization of Brazil*), Jesuit missionaries were essential to Portuguese dominion in Brazil, which made them among the most prominent “go-betweenes” within the colonial project. Metcalf’s study analyzes the representational practices of early modern Europeans as they situated non-European peoples within their own cosmic understanding of the universe. Metcalf focuses her analysis on what she calls the “physical, transactional, and representational” go-betweenes to interrogate the social, biological, and cultural middle ground that arose as a result of

⁵⁰ For a reference related to epidemic disease in Brazil, see Alida Metcalf, *Go-betweenes and the Colonization of Brazil*, 121.

⁵¹ In his work, Daniel T. Reff (*Disease, Depopulation, Culture Change: Northwestern New Spain, 1518-1764* and *Plagues, Priests, and Demons*) makes the connection between Christian baptism and the spread of disease by missionaries, which he understands as “disease episodes.”

Portuguese intervention in Brazil. For Metcalf, “[g]o-betweens influenced the power dynamics at play in the relations between the Indian and European worlds” (2). In her study of biological change in the region post European intervention, for example, Metcalf notes that Jesuit transactions with native populations were a large contributor to the spread of disease from the Old World to the natives, “Because they facilitated contact between the European and the Indian worlds, and typically through language in face-to-face situations, *transactional go-betweens* created situations in which disease could be exchanged” (120).

Today we find examples of these case studies in Jesuit letters from Brazil, where, in addition to their role as “transactional go-betweens,” missionaries also function as “representational go-betweens,” who “sought to explain the meaning of enormous changes, especially the shocking epidemics that decimated the indigenous populations” (120). As Metcalf points out in her chapter “Biology”:

Faced with new and deadly pathogens, with the insatiable European need for laborers to exploit dyewood and sugar, with moral arguments that justified their enslavement, *with the intense men of the Company of Jesus*, and with the slow but steady establishment of Portuguese settlements, the indigenous peoples of Brazil found their traditional way of life assailed from many directions. It has been all too easy to characterize this process as the inexorable march forward of Europeans and the rapid retreat of Indians. *Lost in this approach is an understanding of how native peoples resisted colonization.* (196; my emphasis)

Although sixteenth-century letters from Brazil primarily serve to demonstrate the Jesuit participation in that march, we can also read them “against the grain” to glimpse ways in which the Tupi and Tapuia resisted colonization. In particular, Jesuit letters evince their struggles with two types of healers and spiritual leaders in coastal Brazil—the *pajé* and the *caraíba*—who are documented as having provided some of the greatest opposition to Jesuit missionary settlements in the region.

In order to better understand the complications of missionary encounters with natives—as well as their controversial representation in Jesuit missionary correspondence—a brief excursus on the *pajé* and *caraíba* is necessary. In his exhaustive history of Brazil, Jorge Couto (*A construção do Brasil*) demonstrates that, prior to Jesuit intervention in the territory, the *pajé/caraíba* held the position of spiritual and medical authorities within their communities. He finds that, in this capacity, they administered ritual ceremonies, performed in the interest of social and physical wellness; this included, for example, exorcisms, the administration of blessings for food, guaranteeing the security of warriors, the interpretation of dreams, and directing ceremonies to uphold the natural rhythm of indigenous society (114). Couto also points out that the *pajé* was entrusted as the bearer and perpetuator of local myths (114). The local *pajé* reproduced these myths through song and dance, which served as the mediating forces that linked the physical realm with the supernatural; activities of this nature, which provided the ritual participants with certain forms of occult knowledge and power, were generally induced by trance. This heightened state was often aided by the ingestion of intoxicants or

hallucinogenic drugs, and, with a maraca in hand,⁵² the *pajé* would dance and sing in order to channel cosmic forces to gain otherworldly knowledge, bestow blessings, or call upon the sacred powers necessary to facilitate the targeted ritual task, whether it be health-related or socially-oriented (Couto 114-5).

While native healers and spiritual leaders performed many types of social rituals, one of their most important responsibilities was to serve as a conduit to channel occult knowledge of the natural world from sacred sources, which often focused on medical information, including instructions on how to effectively administer plant-based remedies.⁵³ A drug-induced trance, for example, might provide pertinent information on a specific plant with curative properties, which, in turn, could then be used in the treatment of physical or spiritual maladies. Couto has shown that indigenous medical treatments took various forms, such as bloodletting, an instance in which the *pajé* would use animal teeth to perform the procedure, as well as the administration of medicinal plants, either taken topically or ingested (114-15).⁵⁴ For example, in response to waves of smallpox outbreaks that devastated coastal Tupi and Tapuia populations (1555-1562), the

⁵² On the significance of the *maraca*, see Clastres (*The Land-Without-Evil*) in which she finds that, “The maracas were used by the prophets when making their predictions and no war expedition was undertaken without first consulting them. Some sorcerers use a calabash that resembles a human head, with its hair, its ears, its nose, its eyes, and its mouth; it is on an arrow that takes the place of a neck, and when they want to render an oracle, they make smoke in the calabash burning dry tobacco leaves and then they aspirate through the nose the smoke that comes out through the ears, the eyes, and the mouth of the artificial head, until finally they are as agitated and intoxicated as if they had been drinking” (38).

⁵³ Couto (*A construção do Brasil*) finds that, through tobacco consumption or the ingestion of hallucinogenic drugs, the *pajé/caraíba* would enter into an altered state in which they had access to occult knowledge of the natural world (114-15).

⁵⁴ See chapter 2 for an in-depth look at Brazilian *materia medica* in Portuguese Jesuit Fernão Cardim’s *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil* (1583-1601).

pajé or *caraíba* would have been responsible for the application of the healing technique that was used in which tobacco smoke was blown on the patient to push the disease from the body by means of magical force, a procedure designed to rid the body of physical or mystical pathogenic substances.⁵⁵ In this context, the *pajé* or *caraíba* were understood as general healers among natives.⁵⁶

Despite the conflation of the terms *pajé* and *caraíba* by European writers—which has made the present-day distinction between the two nebulous at best—Couto points out that, though the two served similar social functions, the *caraíba* was generally understood within Tupi and Tapuia culture as an external prophet, while, the *pajé*, in turn, was considered to be internal to the group.⁵⁷ In addition to the presence of a local *pajé*, each community would expect a wandering prophet to pass through roughly every three to four years, generally referred to as a *caraíba*. In this capacity, the *caraíba* enjoyed great prestige among native populations, primarily due to their ability to bring either good or evil to their communities, sometimes serving as harbingers of death.

Understood as projections of mythical heroes within Tupi cosmology, they were ascribed supernatural powers such as the ability to transform humans into birds or other animals or to make them invisible through their powers of metamorphosis. In addition to

⁵⁵ See Johannes Wilbert's *Tobacco and Shamanism in South America* in which he finds that, "Healing of the sick is an essential function of shamans anywhere. To carry out their office, South American tobacco shamans ingest diverse tobacco preparations to contact the omniscient spirit world or they apply them topically to the body of their patient. In the former case, the tobacco shaman enters into a trance, in the course of which the soul leaves his body to consult with spirits and ancestral shamans concerning the cause and cure of his patient" (184).

⁵⁶ See Couto, *A construção do Brasil*, 114.

⁵⁷ See Couto, *A construção do Brasil*, 114-115.

this, the *caraíba* was purported to have the ability to resuscitate the dead through their connection to the spirit world (Couto 114-15).⁵⁸ These forms of supernatural manipulations on the part of the *caraíba* —metamorphosis and necromancy—would have registered as demonic among Christian missionaries, further justifying their campaign to criminalize these individuals as agents of the devil. While we have been able to piece together some of the major distinctions between the *pajé* and the *caraíba*, largely thanks to Couto's exhaustive study, many of the cultural differences among the two types of healers and spiritual leaders in specific case studies is now beyond our grasp due to misrepresentations or incomplete accounts in European records.

Despite these incomplete accounts, Jesuit letters from the period reveal that missionaries came to both recognize and resent the privileged space that the *pajé/caraíba* occupied. To further complicate the matter, the connection between “disease episodes”⁵⁹ and Jesuit missions did not go unnoticed by the *pajé/caraíba*, who actively tried to warn against indigenous engagement with Jesuit missionaries. In this exchange, the primary

⁵⁸ For more information on the role of the *caraíba*, also see Cristina Pompa, “Mitos, ritos e historia,” *Religião como tradução*, 165-195. Pompa uses various European sources to paint a diverse picture of the *caraíba*, always inscribed within male gender norm but as a marginal figure in the community; she attributes this to the fact that the *caraíba* disassociate from linguistic interactions with the rest of the group, unless they are leading a ritual, at which time they are singing. Also, in this setting, the *caraíba* might be solitary, without a sexual partner, or they might be polygamous, taking several lovers. And, finally, it is the virgin women of the group that are responsible for the *caraíba*'s meal preparation.

⁵⁹ Reff has analyzed the link between baptism and “disease episodes” and the Jesuit response to high correspondence between the two in the context of Northwestern New Spain during the colonial period (*Disease, Depopulation, and Culture Change in Northwestern New Spain* 97-179). Andres I. Prieto has also shown this to be the case in the Viceroyalty of Peru (*Missionary Scientists* 47-8). Metcalf (*Go-betweens and the Colonization of Brazil*) finds this to be true in colonial Brazil as well (130).

point of contact between missionaries and local populations occurred via the administration of mass baptism rituals by the Jesuits, which they coupled with the redistribution of Tupi and Tapuia populations onto Jesuit-controlled settlements in order to convert and control native “gentiles.” A close reading of Jesuit letters from the initial phases of contact reveals that missionaries were faced with unprecedented challenges in treating the sick, further complicated by an insufficient work force and the uprising of several indigenous-led resistance movements. As we will see in the next section, the *pajé/caraíba* proved to be a stronghold for native resistance and the preservation of local medical knowledge.

Jesuit Baptism *in extremis*: Missionary Networks of Disease

The *cartas particulares* penned by José de Anchieta, one of the leading Jesuit missionaries in Brazil, represent an important archive in the documentation of the initial encounters between missionaries and the *pajé/caraíba*. I focus here on a set of letters assembled under the title *Cartas, informações, fragmentos historicos e sermões do padre Joseph de Anchieta, S.J. (1554-1594)* [*Letters, informations, historical fragments and sermons of Father Joseph de Anchieta, S.J.*], a collection that provides ample evidence of indigenous resistance to Jesuit baptism and conversion. In his *cartas particulares* from Brazil, Anchieta regularly reports on small-scale resistance movements led by the *pajé/caraíba* in response to Jesuit-performed baptism rituals. We see this, for example, in a quarterly letter from Piratininga (April 1557) in which Anchieta reports of a routine mass baptism that he had just performed in the area. Much

to Anchieta's chagrin, however, the ritual did not go without incident, and, on this particular occasion, a local *pajé*, along with several other "catecumenos" [catechumens], disrupted the ceremony and threatened to kill the missionaries. According to Anchieta, the catechumens had been swayed by "seus feiticeiros" [their sorcerers], whom they call "Pagés" (98-99). He goes on to say that, through his "diabolica imaginação" [diabolical imagination], the *pajé* was able to persuade other natives that "esta igreja [em Piratininga] é feita para sua destruição [dos nativos]" [this church [in Piratininga] is made for their [the natives'] destruction] (99).⁶⁰

In addition to the "blasphemy" that Anchieta perceives on the part of the *pajé*, what is perhaps even more disconcerting to the missionary is the fact that: "[s]e lhes diz isto algum de seus feiticeiros a que chamam Pagés nenhuma cousa têm por mais verdadeira..." [if one of their sorcerers tells them this, which they call Pagés, they hold nothing to be closer to the truth] (98-99). Not only, then, is Anchieta frustrated because the Christian ritual had been interrupted by the *pajé*'s "diabolical imagination" but also because the locals, i.e. possible converts, *believe* these "Pagés." For the Jesuits, the Amerindians' belief in the *pajé*'s accusations against the missionaries was a sign of the Devil's stronghold in the territory; via this logic, they reasoned that Satan had effectively entrapped these "gentile" souls through his demonic manipulations fueled by deceit. This posed a serious problem for the Company of Jesus because, in their eyes, the loss of each

⁶⁰ All translations from Portuguese to English are my own in this chapter. For all primary sources, I have supplied the original Portuguese. For secondary sources originally in Portuguese but translated into English, I have supplied the English translation only as a matter of economy.

pagan soul meant that Satan's army had grown one stronger, as he continued to wage his war against God in the ultimate battle between good and evil.

This episode is one of many that highlights the link between the Jesuit demonization of native healers and spiritual leaders as agents of the Devil (i.e. "sorcerers"), as Jesuit attempted to undermine the authority of these oppositional forces because the local *pajé/caraíba* worked to warn native populations of the link between missionary contact and the spread of disease. In hindsight, however, the paradox in Anchieta's letter from Piratininga lies in the high probability that the *pajé/caraíba* were, in fact, correct: Christian churches, infested with European diseases, were often the initial site of contact that facilitated the spread of disease among natives. To complicate the matter further, we even have evidence that Anchieta went so far as to call *sick* Jesuit missionaries to action in Brazil, which no doubt added to the spread of disease as Jesuits worked to baptize, confess, and Christianize natives. In doing so, missionaries drastically altered Tupi and Tapuia kinship structures through Jesuit-sanctioned impositions related to monogamy and "Christian" marriage.

In 1554 Anchieta wrote to his "Irmãos enfermos de Coimbra" [Sick brothers from Coimbra] from the mission of São Vicente, and told them of "[a] larga conversação que tive nessas enefermarias [no Brasil]" [a long conversation that he had in these infirmaries

[in Brasil]], which made him think of his “coenférmos” [brothers in sickness].⁶¹

Anchieta begins his letter with a warm salutation:

Muito tendes, carissimos Irmãos, que dar graças ao Senhor, porque vos fez participantes de seus trabalhos e enfermidades, em as quais mostrou o amor que nos tinha: razão será que os [seus trabalhos e enfermidades] sirvamos algum pouco, tendo grande paciencia nas enfermidades e, nestas, aperfeiçoando a virtude. (62)

Having much, dear Brothers, for which to give thanks to God, because you are all participants of his labors and sicknesses, through which he showed the love that he had for us: the reason must be that we serve them somehow [his labors and sicknesses], having great patience in sickness and, through this, perfecting virtue.

In this passage, Anchieta not only writes to console his “coenférmos” but also takes the opportunity to summon his sick brothers in Coimbra to Brazil. He ends his letter by writing: “Finalmente, carissimos Irmãos, sei dizer que se o padre Mirão [reitor do colégio] quiser mandar-vos a todos os que andais opilados e meio doentes, a terra é mui bôa e ficareis mui sãos. As medicinas são trabalhos e tão melhores quanto mais conforme a Cristo” [Finally, dear Brothers, I know to say that, if father Mirão [rector of the college] might want to send all of you that go about with parasites and half sick, the land is very

⁶¹ See *Cartas, informações, fragmentos historicos e sermões do padre Joseph de Anchieta, S.J. (1554-1594)*, in which Anchieta claims that, “A larga conversação que tive nessas enfermarias me faz não me poder esquecer de meus carissimos coenférmos ...” (62).

good and you will end up very healthy. Work is medicine, and so much better in conformity with Christ] (64).

In order to understand Anchieta's view of missionary work as medicine it is necessary to unpack the Jesuit-held belief of "virtue in sickness." This becomes evident in his letter cited above, as he goes on to say that: "Nesta quero sómente dar-vos uma nova e é que *virtus in infirmitate perficitur*" [In this [letter] I only want to give you all one piece of news and it is that virtue is perfected in sickness] (62). The Latin verse inscribed within the letter, *virtus in infirmitate perficitur*, is a direct reference to 2 Corinthians 12, an important piece of Paul's epistles, which recount the trials and tribulations that Paul endured throughout his apostolic ministry in Corinth.⁶² Paul the Apostle is an important figure for Jesuit missionaries, as Paul himself was a leading example in the ancient world of the power of apostolic ministry to spread Christianity among pagan forces.⁶³ 2 Corinthians 12 is dedicated to "Paul's Visions and Revelations."

⁶² See 2 Corinthians 11:24-27: "Five times I have received at the hands of the Jews the forty lashes less one. Three times I have been beaten with rods; once I was stoned. Three times I have been shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been adrift at sea; on frequent journeys, in danger from rivers, danger from robbers, danger from my own people, danger from gentiles, danger in the city, danger in the wilderness, danger at sea, danger from false brethren; in toil and hardship, through many sleepless night, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure" (*The Ignatius Bible*).

⁶³ According to John W. O'Malley: "Like so many of their contemporaries, they were inspired by a sense of the immediacy of the New Testament and by the direct relevance of biblical realities and events for their lives and their age. They were not moved by apocalyptic thinking, nor did they believe in some myth of cyclical return. But the contemplations in the *Exercises* encouraged them to transport themselves in their imaginations back to the biblical events and then to interpret their lives as in some sense a reenactment of them—or better, as their continuation. In the concrete this meant intense cultivation of preaching (and all other ministries of the Word of God) and of various

According to Paul, in order to keep him grounded in the face of these divine interventions, “a thorn was given me in the flesh, a messenger of Satan, to harass me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it should leave me; but he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness [*virtus in infirmitate perficitur*]’” (2 Corinthians 12: 7-9).

John B. Polhill describes how the theme of power and weakness articulated here begins in 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5, “where Paul spoke of the wisdom and power of the cross” (*Paul and His Letters* 274). According to Polhill, “Weakness was the *mark* of Paul’s apostleship. Through his own human frailty Paul could see the power of God’s grace at work in his ministry, almost in spite of himself. It was a constant reminder of the cross, how out of weakness and death God brings resurrection and life” (274). Much like Paul, Anchieta was a frail, sick man, who found his own weakness as a virtue bestowed on him by God. He extends the invitation to his sick brothers in Coimbra, “[d]esejando vê-los curar com outras mais fortes mezinhas, que as que lá se usam [em Portugal]; porque sem dúvida pelo que em mim experimentei, vos posso dizer que as mezinhas matérias pouco fazem e aproveitam” [wishing to see them cured with other, stronger local medicines, than the ones that are used there [in Portugal]; because without a doubt based on what I experienced, I can tell you all that material medicines do little and are weak] (62). In this regard, Anchieta finds that the *true* medicine that his sick brothers in

forms of healing (in body and soul), the resolution not to accept direct recompense, and a life together in which all goods were held in common” (*The First Jesuits* 372).

Coimbra lacked was an active missionary agenda, given that “material medicines do little.”

For Anchieta, then, not only did he write to his sick brothers in Coimbra to spread news of the healing power of missionary work in Brazil but also because he was eager to expand the Company’s labor power in their missions. His letters reveal that there was a high demand for Jesuit missionaries in Brazil to sustain the Order’s “spiritual conquest” in the territory. According to Anchieta, it is the sick brothers that have the capacity to do the most good: “Tambem vos digo que não basta com qualquer fervor sair de Coimbra, senão que é necessario trazer alforge cheio de virtudes adquiridas, porque de verdade os trabalhos da Companhia tem nesta terra são grandes...” [I am also telling that it is not enough to leave Coimbra not with just any fervor, but that it is also necessary to bring bags full of acquired virtues, because, honestly, the Company’s works in this land are great...] (“Irmãos enfermos de Coimbra” 64). The “virtues” to which Anchieta is referring in this passage undoubtedly include those that the brothers had acquired through sickness.

We have a second letter written by Anchieta in the same year asking for sick missionaries to be sent to help in Brazil, but this time the letter is addressed directly to Loyola (Piratininga, July 1554). Anchieta writes:

E assim mesmo se se fizessem aqui casas da Companhia seria bom, que fizéssemos troca com os Irmãos do Colegio de Coimbra, de maneira que nos mandassem para cá os indispostos de lá, desde que tenham propensão

à virtude, os quais aqui se curariam com os trabalhos e bondade da terra...”

(66)

And just like this, if we were to make Company houses here, it would be good, that we were to exchange the Brothers from the College of Coimbra, such that you all send us the indisposed from there to here, given that they have a propensity to virtue, who would be cured with work and goodness of the land...

In his letter, Anchieta makes a direct request to Loyola, and, again, specifies that he send *sick* Jesuits, “os indispostos,” from Coimbra given their elevated level of virtue, which he understood to be a direct correlate to their ailments. What becomes clear through the juxtaposition of these two letters, inspired by Paul the Apostle and his own experience with *virtus in infirmitate*, is that not only is he interested in helping his “coénfermos” get well but he is also pleading to his sick brothers in Coimbra to help him fight Satan’s influence over local catechumens in Brazil, where the Company faced many challenges in their efforts at conversion.

Additionally, Anchieta’s pleas for missionary support in Brazil give further testimony that indigenous-led resistance movements continued to pose a difficult obstacle for the Order. In response to the opposition that the missionaries faced, the Jesuit strategy was to confess, baptize, and settle natives, primarily children, within the borders of their *aldeias*, or reductions. The practice of the Jesuit reduction of native populations into fixed communities, as was the case in the mission settlements throughout the coast of

Brazil (along with the Americas more broadly), was a central endeavor in determining missionary success on the ground. The combination of mass baptism and Jesuit-sponsored reductions, in turn, provided the necessary contact for the spread of disease among natives. The settlement of Tupi and Tapuia populations intensified with governor-general Mem de Sá's policy of pacification (1557-1572), which was overseen by Jesuits Manuel da Nóbrega and José de Anchieta.⁶⁴

On a biological level, the increase in Jesuit reductions due to this policy overlaps significantly with a seven-year long outbreak of smallpox from 1555 to 1562.⁶⁵ The first reported case in the outbreak was documented among the French Huguenots in Rio de Janeiro (1555). The disease then purportedly made its way through the interior forests and up along the coast, not relenting until 1562. Both native healers and Jesuit missionaries did their best to respond to the epidemic. For example, native healers built beds of leaves and branches upon which they would place the sick. They would then surround the patient with smoke to try to rid the body of the malady. Missionaries, in turn, approached the disease through a method of bloodletting, which was performed by

⁶⁴ See Michael John Francis's *Iberia and the Americas: Culture, Politics, and History* in which he finds that, "Following the policy of pacification undertaken by the governor-general Mem de Sá (1557-1572), Brazil's Jesuits began to gather and instruct the natives in villages under their guardianship (*aldeamentos*), where they endeavored to foster the Indians' acculturation and assimilation, thus creating an indigenous peasantry. In doing so, they offered an alternative to the enslavement and slaughter of the Indians, practices followed by many of Brazil's early colonists" (604).

⁶⁵ See Donald R. Hopkins, *The Greatest Killer: Smallpox in History*, 215.

applying leeches to their patients. Despite these efforts, in the end, neither treatment was effective.⁶⁶

The letters of a nameless Jesuit stationed in São Vicente also document the spread of disease among native populations. They are included in a manuscript compiled by an unknown hand from 1557 under the title “*Cartas do provincial da Companhia de Jesus*” [Letters of the Provincial of the Company of Jesus]. The letters are dated from the first half of the 1550s⁶⁷ and were penned under the oversight of the provincial father of Brazil at the time, Manuel da Nóbrega.⁶⁸ While there are two letters from Nóbrega included in the set, the first and the last, the other letters are attributed to the same anonymous hand, a missionary writing from São Vicente. His epistolary narrative reveals that he has been ordered to write “*as cousas d’esta Capitania [São Vicente]*” [the things of this captaincy] by Nóbrega (folio 3). In order to comply with the epistolary conventions that Loyola set forth for the Company of Jesus, these reports were designed to circulate among Jesuit *aldeias* in Brazil as well as to the rest of the brotherhood organized around the Jesuit colleges in Coimbra and Évora in Portugal. This allowed them to exchange local information, conversion tactics, as well as to engage in spiritual solidarity via their

⁶⁶ See Kohh, “Brazilian smallpox epidemic, 1555–1562,” 40.

⁶⁷ These letters are located at the Biblioteca Nacional in Rio de Janeiro (“*Cartas do provincial da Companhia de Jesus*” 11,2,29).

⁶⁸ The provincial father was responsible for the concentration of all of the information in reference to the progress of ongoing activities in the colony. As Paulo Assunção’s research indicates, the letters disseminated within the Order paid special attention to the principal questions and problems that the territories were facing with the goal of finding the most effective and “correct” resolution for the good of the Company (*Negócios Jesuítcos* 229).

epistolary transmissions, which worked to keep missionaries gathered at the outskirts of empire connected to the Order's imperial center in Western Europe.⁶⁹

In a letter addressed to his brothers in Portugal, the anonymous Jesuit from São Vicente documents the problem of disease outbreaks in and around the mission, and complains that the native “feiticeiros” claim, “[q]ue os matamos com o bautismo, e provão-lho porque muitas d’elles morrerão, e contudo permanecem no começado, com muito trabalho dos padres, que não fazem senão pregar contra isso” [that we kill them with baptism, and they prove it because many of them will die, and because of this they remain at the beginning [of conversion], with a lot of work on the part of the fathers, that do nothing more than preach against this] (folio 4).⁷⁰ The missionary goes on to write to his brothers in Portugal that, because of the high mortality rate linked to baptism, the natives would flee from the fathers “dizendo que lhes botavão a morte, e a temorem-nos, e por medo fazerem quanto lhe pedem [os feiticeiros]” [saying that they brought upon them death, and they feared us, and because of fear they did whatever they [the sorcerers] asked of them] (folio 4).

Initially, the anonymous Jesuit from São Vicente is compelled to negate the connection between baptism and death. First, he accuses the “feiticeiros” of deception by alleging that the missionaries were using Christian baptism rituals to murder natives. But,

⁶⁹ See Steven J. Harris, “Confession-building, Long-Distance Networks, and the Organization of Jesuit Science,” 287-313.

⁷⁰ In my transcriptions of the anonymous Jesuit letters from São Vicente, I have been as faithful to the original as possible, only expanding abbreviated words to clarify meaning. I indicate these interventions with brackets. All translations from Portuguese to English are my own.

then, in a moment of ambivalence, he does admit that a disproportionate number of indigenous are dying, and he cannot seem to deny the obvious correlate that exists between baptisms and these “disease episodes.” For the missionary, “O motivo que tiverão os feiticeiros a pregarem isto, foi por hum grande e evidente juízo de Nosso Senhor, que n’esta terra obrou” [The reason that the sorcerers had to preach this [that we kill them with baptism], was due to the great and evident judgment of Our Lord, that worked in this land...] (folio 4). The “judgment of our Lord” that the missionary applies to the epidemic crisis implies that the natives are dying because God has willed it so. We see this logic even more clearly in the letter as the Jesuit explains that the death of the natives post baptism was the ultimate act of salvation put forth by God, because “não podião ser christãos, e viver costumes de gentios, como de antes cuidavam, por quanto os bautisavão, deixando-os viver como de antes ... que ser christão, que era mais que andar vestido e bautisar-se” [they could not be Christians, and live their gentile customs, like they did before, because being Christian was more than wearing clothes and being baptized] (“Carta do padre para os irmãos de Portugal” folio 4).

This passage points to the problem of *true* conversion among the natives, and, as the Jesuit points out, “being Christian was more than wearing clothes and being baptized.” For the Jesuits, moral degeneration, i.e. the regression to “gentile customs,” is viewed as a spiritual disease that requires purification through Christian rituals such as baptism and confession. According to the logic of the anonymous Jesuit in São Vicente, since moral degeneration cannot be prevented among the “gentiles,” the Creator has decided to intervene and take the life of the cleansed soul just after baptism so that they

can enter eternal salvation pure and clean of their idolatrous practices.⁷¹ At the same time, the missionary also documents his frustration with the authority that Tupi and Tapuia healers and spiritual leaders continued to exercise, which goes to show that the *pajé/caraíba* were at the forefront of protests against Jesuit evangelization. As a result, the anonymous Jesuit demonizes them as “sorcerers.” We see yet another layer of meaning embedded within his logic, as the missionary tries to make sense of the demographic impact of epidemic disease in the *aldeia* in his letter: in this case, the missionary’s response is to interpret the havoc of disease within a spiritual framework that turns the will of God into a source of spiritual salvation, thus counteracting the episodes of death and destruction.

The natives also tried to reconcile their own cosmological medical systems with the unprecedented amount of sickness and disease afflicting their communities. In many instances, traditional cures no longer appeared effective in the face of Old World pathogens, which some interpreted as a sign that the Christians were, in fact, spiritually more powerful. This, in turn, led to a large population of willing converts among the natives.⁷² These episodes also highlight the importance of the soul in Christian theories of

⁷¹ Maria Leônia Chaves de Resende makes this same observation in the context of seventeenth-century Guarani territories in Brazil and notes that Jesuit missionaries often reasoned that death was a positive thing for indigenous people, as it allowed for them to break from the “vices” and “sins” that kept them chained to the Devil (“Jesuítas e pajés nas missões do Novo Mundo” 232).

⁷² In his discussion of Thomas Harriot’s *A Brief and True Report of the Newfound Land of Virginia* (1588), Greenblatt (“Invisible Bullets: Renaissance Authority and its Subversion) provides an analysis of a powerful metaphor documented by Harriot in which ‘invisible’ bullets were identified as the cause of epidemic disease among Algonkian natives of North America (18-47). Wisecup (*Medical Encounters*) gives her

health and sickness. In fact, both Christian and Tupi/Tapuia belief systems associate physical with metaphysical wellbeing. Loyola's introductory remarks to his *Spiritual Exercises* (Rome, 1548) help to explain Jesuit conceptualizations of health and sickness, in both the physical and spiritual sense. He instructs that,

For just as taking a walk, traveling on foot, and running are physical exercises, so is the name of Spiritual Exercises given to any *means of preparing and disposing our soul to rid itself of all its disordered affections* and then, after their removal, of *seeking and finding God's will in the ordering of our life for the salvation of our soul*. (10; my emphasis)

For the Jesuits, in the case of the conversion of pagan souls in the Americas, their "gentile" customs were considered "disordered affections," and, in response to this malady, missionaries used baptism as a remedy. The correlation between baptism and "disease episodes" lies at the crux of Jesuit and Tupi/Tapuia power struggles in Brazil, as missionaries worked to find God's will amidst the death and destruction plaguing native communities.

own reading of the account and she explains that: 'The image of disease as "invisible bullets" designated the Europeans as beings who, similar to the Thunder-birds, possessed potent weapons and powers that had horrifying effects on the Roanokes' health. In this way, the invisible-bullets theory addressed the dramatic social and spiritual changes wrought by contact-era epidemics, and it communicated the Roanokes' altered spiritual relations with divine forces by interpreting the disease as a punishment for actions against the colonists' (54). In the case of Brazil, there is a similar dynamic at play within the Jesuit spread of disease among native populations; as locals and missionaries tried to make sense of the asymmetrical spread of disease, all signs seemed to point to the powerful God that the Christians served, given that the Jesuits themselves were not susceptible to the smallpox epidemics (along with other European-borne pathogens) that decimated the Tupi and Tapuia.

As we will see in the following account, outside of the spiritual realm, the Jesuit discourse of sorcery carried legal implications as well. The anonymous Jesuit from São Vicente documents the story of the imprisonment of two native *pajés* at the house of Nossa Senhora in Rio Vermelho, a settlement under the oversight of Father João Gonsalves. Here, the missionary complains that “forão muitos outros da aldeã a fazer oferta das raises a deo mantimento a hum seo feiticeiro, pera que lhes fizesse crescer, o que tinham prantando, dando-lhe chuiva, e tempo conveniente” [there were many from the *aldeia* that made offerings of roots and gave provisions to one of their sorcerers, so that he would make what they had planted grow, giving them rain and good weather] (folio 16). In addition to this, “blasfemarem da nossa doutrina” [they said blasphemies about our doctrine] (folio 16). As a result, the *feiticeiros* were imprisoned for seven or eight days by order of governor Duarte Coelho (1534-1554), or perhaps on order of his wife, who continued his mandate through 1555 after he returned to Portugal in 1554 (he died in 1555, which ended his rule). However, given that the letters can be dated anywhere between 1549 and 1555, the one responsible for the command to imprison the *pajés* in Rio Vermelho remains unclear.

This episode demonstrates that, when Jesuits missionaries were ineffective in combating the local *pajé/caraíba* through persuasive rhetoric alone, they resorted to more severe measures. After the confinement of the *pajé* by the Portuguese authorities, for example, the anonymous Jesuit reports that: “fiquarão todos amedrontados, que dahi por diante se comecarão a encher as Igrejas ... de maneira que ... vimos o notavel proveito, que nasceo de se castigar aquelle feiticeiro” [they were all terrified, and from that point

on the churches began to fill up ... in such a way that ... we saw the notable advantage which was born from punishing that sorcerer] (folio 16). He also reports that the provisions that were once offered to the *pajé* were now being given to the Church:

[V]em ja a pedir saude á Igreja a Nosso Senhor, pera si e pera os seos, si estão doentes, ... não querião que lhe bautisassem, por lhe diserem seus feiticeiros, que morrerião logo... mas ja agora de boa vontade dão seos filhos, antes que morrão ao batismo, e deste mandamos bom quinhões de inocentes regenerados com o Sancto bautismo em Céos. (folio 16)

Now they come to ask for health from the Church to Our Lord, for themselves and for their kin, if they are sick, they did not want to be baptized, because of what their sorcerers told them, that they would die after... But now they give their children freely before they die to the baptism, and in this way we send a good portion of regenerated innocents to the sanctity of baptism in the Heavens.

The imprisonment of the *pajé* in this account led to a shift in the power dynamic between native leaders and the larger colonial regime, which allowed the Jesuits to assert their newfound authority over the spiritual—if not the physical—salvation of the natives. In this sense, the captivity of the *pajés* restructured the social organization in Rio Vermelho and, if we are to believe the Jesuit's reports, it effectively discouraged any open challenge to the Christian doctrine.

Although this example proves to be—or at least is presented as—a success story for Jesuit evangelization, we know that the social position of the *pajé/caraíba* continued

to operate in resistance to these colonial power structures. During the period of 1562 through 1609, for example, there were four mass migrations—known as *santidades*, the term designated for these pockets of resistance in colonial Brazil—led by natives. The notion of the *santidade* in the context of sixteenth-century Brazil is the product of several layers of cross-cultural exchange between Amerindians, Africans, and Europeans. In his article “From Indian Millenarianism to a Tropical Witches’ Sabbath: Brazilian Sanctities in Jesuit Writings and Inquisitorial Sources,” Ronald Vainfas provides significant insight into the way in which Tupi millenarian migrations were adapted and changed post encounter. First and foremost, the organization of the *santidades* was constructed based upon pre-contact indigenous beliefs: these movements were part of a larger mythological structure of the *Terra sem Mal*. Vainfas explains that:

They believed that a new age of prosperity of Golden age was close. This new era announced by the Indian prophets would enable them to return to an ancient time; it would also enable a return to a sacred place, a land of immortality, where the spirits of brave Tupinamba warriors, their wives and special preachers would find home. According to this legend, the *pajé-açus* (preachers) were in touch with ancient spirits from Tupi mythology. (216)

The *Terra sem Mal* would take on new significance in the colonial era in which the *Santidade de Jaguaripe* in particular serves as a significant example of successful indigenous resistance between the years of 1580 and 1585, just outside of Bahia.

Despite the threat that these resistance movements posed to colonial settlements, a critical reading of Portuguese Jesuit Fernão Cardim's letter to the provincial father of Portugal (Bahia, 1585)—set alongside the history of these *santidade* movements—points to the active threat that native healers and spiritual leaders often posed to Jesuit evangelization projects and the larger colonial mission. In his letter, Cardim promises, “contar todo o principal que nos tem sucedido, não somente na viagem, mas também em todo o tempo da visita que Vossa Reverência” [to relate the main events that have happened to us, not only during the voyage but also for the entirety of our visit so that Your Reverence will be fully aware of the things which make up this province], though this is not what he actually does. Cardim is conspicuously silent with regard to many of the problems that faced colonial settlers in his narrative—such as the epidemic spread of European disease that natives suffered and, in response to colonization efforts, the large-scale resistance movements sweeping the coast—as he describes Piratininga as: “terra muito sadia, há nela grande frios e geadas e boas calmas, é cheia de velhos mais que centenários, porque em quatro juntos e vivos se acharam quinhentos anos” [very healthy land, in which there are great colds and frosts and good heat, it is full of elderly more than 100 years old, because in four of them alive together there can be found 500 years] (274). His depiction of native health and wellness seems suspicious here, given that Cardim's description of a “very healthy land” full of centenarians does not match up with the epidemiological history of Brazil at this time.

In fact, as we have seen, the region was rife with the demographic devastation left behind by outbreaks of smallpox. In addition to this, as we read Cardim's narrative

against the inquisitional records from Bahia (1591-1592), we find that there are significant omissions in which Cardim does not make any mention of the anti-colonial resistance (the *Santidade de Jaguaripe*) that swept the coast of Brazil throughout the 1580s. Due to significant elisions in the letter, it is necessary that we read it first and foremost as a piece of Jesuit-sponsored propaganda, and not as an accurate representation of Brazil. Ultimately, the letter from Bahia (1585) serves as an advertisement designed to further the Order's goals to encourage future waves of settlers and missionaries necessary to continue the Company of Jesus's colonial enterprise. For example, Cardim worked to construct coastal Brazil as "um novo Portugal" [a new Portugal] in his letter to highlight the abundance of the land as well as the successful transfer of European plants and animals to the colony. News of a colonial uprising outside of Bahia in which Portuguese plantations were being burned and ransacked as African and indigenous peoples marched out of the confines of slavery into the Amazon would not help to persuade potential venture capitalists to relocate or invest in the area—and, thus, they did not make it into this particular letter.

This becomes clear as we read Cardim's letter alongside his *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil* (1583-1601), which goes to show that Cardim was, in fact, aware of the *Santidade* and the continued social power of the *caraíba*, which he condemns along with the rest of his brothers writing from Brazil. In his larger treatise, Cardim claims that the indigenous "usam de alguns feitiços, e feiticeiros, não porque creiam neles, nem os adorem, mas somente se dão a chupar em suas enfermidades, parecendo-lhes que receberão saúde, mas não por outro algum respeito" [rely on some spells, and sorcerers,

not because they believe in them, nor do they adore them, but they give themselves to sucking treatments for their sicknesses, seeming to them that they will become healthy, but not for any other reason] (166).⁷³ For Cardim, the *caraíba* is “de ordinário algum Índio de ruim vida: este faz algumas feitiçarias, e cousas estranhas à natureza, como mostrar que ressuscita algum vivo que se faz de morto” [usually some Indian of a terrible life: this one performs some superstitions, strange things to nature, such as showing that he can revive someone that was once dead] (*Tratados* 167). Cardim goes on to write that the *caraíba* deceive and trick the natives, “e com esta falsidade os traz tão embebidos, e encantados, deixando de olhar por suas vidas” [and with this falsity they bring them drunken, and enchanted, leaving them within an inch of their lives] (166-167). Cardim’s accusation that the *caraíba* is an enchanter, sorcerer, necromancer, and false prophet is indicative of the power that native healers and spiritual leaders were able to maintain well into the 1580s (and beyond), despite Jesuit spiritual intervention dating back to the 1550s.

In this instance in particular, Cardim is referring to the *caraíba* known to have founded the *Santidade de Jaguaripe*, a native, baptized under the Christian name Antonio, who escaped from the Jesuit *aldeia* of Tinharé. The escapee renamed himself Tamandaré, a reference to one of the great Tupinamba ancestors, and also called himself

⁷³ In her book *Amazons, Wives, Nuns & Witches: Women and the Catholic Church in Colonial Brazil, 1500-1822*, Carole A. Myscofski explains that: “In this edict [the *Monitório do inquisidor geral*], magical practices were distinguished from religious, and in fact fell first at the top of the lists of sins—literally so, since these acts were considered heretical offenses against the First Commandment. In the *Regimentos* for the Portuguese Inquisition, confession manuals dispatched to the new colony, and proclamations of each new visit, officials condemned the practitioners of any banned ritual or occult science as heretics, for they defied the commandment that worship and obedience was uniquely due to the one Christian God, and there were to be no ‘other gods’” (198).

Papa, or Pope. Through this process of renaming alone, we see the layers of cross-cultural exchange present within the *Santidade*, and, as is evinced by Cardim's account, Antonio/Tamandaré/Papa struck a serious nerve with Jesuit missionaries, particularly given that he escaped from a Jesuit mission to organize the *Santidade*, and even goes so far as to call himself the Pope. Accounts like these, of heretical crimes in Brazil, eventually reached leading Church officials in Portugal at an alarming rate.

On 2 March 1591, the general inquisitor of the Holy Office named Heitor Furtado de Mendonça *Visitador* of the bishoprics of Cabo Verde, São Tomé, and Brazil; between 1591 and 1592, Mendonça led the first visitation of the Holy Office in Brazil. In this capacity, he was sent to collect confessions, give denunciations, and implement ratifications to ensure orderly conduct among old and new Christians. To get a handle on the situation, the Holy Office sent Mendonça to report “[t]odas e quaisquer pessoas ... que se acharem culpadas, sospeitas ou infamadas no delito e crime de heresia, e apostasia ou em outro qualquer que pertença ao St.^o officio da Inquisição” [all those and whichever peoples that are found guilty, suspected or defamed in the wrongdoing and crime of heresy, and apostasy or in whatever other [offense] that belongs to the Holy Office of the Inquisition] (*Primeira visitação do Santo Officio* 2). The confession records from the tribunal in Brazil (1591-1592) indicate that the Inquisition was primarily concerned with uprooting the continued practices of false converts among the Jewish population, many of whom sought religious refuge in the more loosely governed colonial outposts of the empire.

Upon his arrival, however, Anchieta wrote to Mendonça with news of the *Santidade* movement, and Mendonça went to investigate the matter soon thereafter.⁷⁴ As he documents Christian confessions related to the *Santidade*, what was, perhaps, most disturbing for Church officials was the fact that the movement was operating under the protection of a “christão velho” [old Christian], sugar plantation owner Fernão Cabral de Taíde. The Portuguese Inquisition arrived in Bahia on 28 July 1591, and, on 2 August 1591, Mendonça sat down with Cabral to elicit his confession regarding the *Santidade*: “e confessando [Cabral] dise que auerá seis anos pouco mais ou menos que se leuantou hu gentio no sertão cõ huã nova seita que chamauão Santidade auendo hum que se chamaua papa e huã gentia que se chamaua may de Deos” [and confessing, [Cabral] said that six years ago, more or less, a gentile in the backlands rose up with a new sect that they called Sanctity, being one that called himself pope and a woman that called herself mother of God] (35).

What we begin to see in the case of the *Santidade de Jaguaripe* is that, at the core of its conception, the movement was conceived based on the amalgamation of both Tupi and Christian magico-religious rites that conveyed spiritual power and medical authority within the milieu of sixteenth-century coastal Brazil.⁷⁵ Ostensibly, the *Santidade* landed a

⁷⁴ See the introduction to the *Primeira visitaçãõ do Santo Officio*, (ed. Paulo Prado), 7.

⁷⁵ Metcalf (*Go-betweenes and the Colonization of Brazil*) also points out that the *Santidade* de Jaguaripe of 1585 was different from similar movements in that this *Santidade*, in particular, adopted Christian elements such as mass, confession, and baptism, which was particularly startling for Jesuit missionaries as the Jesuits themselves employed the same religious devices to convert natives to Catholicism (216). In addition to the appropriation of Christian rituals, Metcalf also shows how the consumption of

protected place on Fernão Cabral de Taíde's sugar plantation for several months in 1585, where the *Santidade* gained strength until it was destroyed at the order of the Governor in Brazil in that same year.⁷⁶ Though none of the confessors were officially prosecuted—largely due to the fact that the tribunal provided a thirty-day grace period in which all sins were absolved if confessed—we know that, of the various inquisitorial items present within the confession documents from Brazil, a primary concern of the Inquisition was to identify witches and sorcerers in the region.

According to the “Monitorio do Inquisidor Geral” (*Primeira visitação do Santo Officio as partes do Brasil*), inquisitional concerns regarding idolatry and sorcery are listed in the following manner:

Item, se sabeis, vistes ou ovistes que algumas pessoas, ou pessoa, fizeram ou fazem certas invocações dos diabos, andando como bruxas de noite em companhia dos demônios, como os malefícios, feiticeiros, maléficas, feiticeiras, costumão fazer, e fazem encommendandose a Belzebut, e a Sathanas, e a Barrabás, e renegando a nossa sancta Fé Catholica, oferecendo ao diabo a alma, ou algum membro, ou membros de seu corpo, e crendo em

tobacco represents an important residue of indigenous practices, set within the larger frame of the *Santidade* as a cross-cultural spiritual organization.

⁷⁶ Metcalf also analyzes the denunciations, confessions, and trial records recorded by the Inquisition of 1591 in Salvador along with the Jesuit annual letter of 1585 (*Annuæ litterae Societatis Iesu*), written either by José de Anchieta (Provincial until 1585 or 1586), or his replacement, Marçal de Belarte. She confirms that: “Together they [the Inquisition records and the letter] provide enough description to reconstruct how the *Santidade* de Jaguaripe resisted the expanding power of the sugar planters and royal officials of the Portuguese colony, and how *new kinds of representational go-betweens* created new religious beliefs and practices that challenged the Society of Jesus” (*Go-betweens and the Colonization of Brazil* 215; my emphasis).

elle, e adorandoo, e chamandoo para que lhes diga cousas que estão por vir, cujo saber, a sô Deos todo poderoso pertenece. (43)

Item, if you know, saw, or heard that some people, or person, did or is doing certain invocations of devils, walking about as witches of the night accompanied by demons, like those malevolent sorcerers, or malevolent sorceresses usually do, they do [it] with prayers to Belzebut, and to Satan, and to Barrabas, and renouncing our Catholic Holy Faith, offering the devil the soul, or some body member, or members of their body, and believing in him [the Devil], and adoring him, and calling him so that he tells them things that are to come, whose knowledge, only belongs to God all powerful.

Here we can begin to see the way in which the role of the *pajé/caraíba* is inserted into pre existing ideological parameters that governed official Church discourse centered on “witches of the night accompanied by demons, like those malevolent sorcerers, or malevolent sorceresses,” categories that had already been negatively charged within the established discourse of witchcraft and sorcery. These categories would have conjured up vivid images of the witch’s Sabbath and other rituals associated with the Dark Arts already circulating among Western European imaginaries.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ With regard to the history of the discourse of witchcraft in late medieval and early modern Europe, Sivlia Federici (*Caliban and the Witch*) finds that, “After the Council of Trent (1545-1563), the Counter-Reformation took a strong position against popular healers, fearing their power and deep roots in the culture of their communities” (201). With regard to how this discourse was transposed onto the New World, her research

Cabral's confession goes on to report that: "[e] tinham hu idolo a que chamauão Maria que era huã figura de pedra que nè demonstraua ser figura de homè nè de molher nè de outro animal, ao qual idolo adorauão e rezeuão certas cousas per contas" [[a]nd they had an idol that they called Maria, which was a stone figure that was neither the figure of man nor the figure of a woman nor the figure of an animal, which they adored and [used] to pray for certain things, per accounts] (35). Not only had the Santidade converted Mother Mary into an idol but Cabral's confession also reveals that: "[p]endurauão na casa que chamauão igreja huãs tauoas com hus riscos que diziam que erão contas bentas e assim ao seu modo, contrafaziam, o culto diuino dos christãos" [they hung planks with scratches that they said were holy figures in the house that they called church and, like this, in their way, they imitated the divine cult of the Christians] (35). In the case of these types of idols or amulets, for the Christian, Amerindian, and West African ritual specialists that intersected with one another on the coast of Brazil, supernatural power was transferred from an otherworldly source to spiritually charged objects. In other words, the sacred object served as the vessel through which supernatural energy could be grounded in order to manifest occult power on the physical plane.

Cabral's reports here of idols and holy figures would have resonated with Jesuit missionaries and Church officials as unauthorized displays of power, imbued with demonic intentions, given that they perversely "imitated the divine cult of the Christians." From the vantage point of the colonizer, the use of ritual objects and prayers by

contends that, "Witch-hunting and charges of the devil-worshipping were brought to the Americas to break the resistance of the local populations, justifying colonization and the slave trade in the eyes of the world" (198).

unauthorized personnel represented an open channel between ritual participants and the Devil. More specifically, the adoption of Christian rituals into the context of a counter cult represents a perversion of Godly practices, a sure sign of satanic manipulation. In the eyes of the Catholic Church, “[i]t is only through the church that material objects might become vehicles of *faith* and *divine* power,” as opposed to objects of demonic worship (Pietz, “The Problem of the Fetish, II,” 38; my emphasis). As in the West African context analyzed by Pietz, the discourse on fetishism stigmatized native populations and justified European intervention in the spiritual beliefs and natural resources of Brazil.

Beyond the use of idols and enchanted objects, there is much more to the transcultural nature of the *Santidade*, which, much to the dismay of missionaries and the Holy Office, transformed and appropriated Christian rituals via the incorporation of Tupi elements. For example, we have reports of the *Santidade de Jaguaripe* in which *petima*, an herb-infused drink with tobacco as its base, was ingested in a water-based purification rite. Vainfas discusses these episodes in his article “From Indian Millenarianism to a Tropical Witches Sabbath” to point out that:

The Sanctity combined Christian rites with ‘gentile’ customs such as the use of calabashes as bells [*maracás*]. For the Sanctity to enter their bodies, devotees drank a beverage made of a herb known as *petima*, distinguished by ‘its great potency and enormous warmth’ and fell to the ground, delirious, shouting, and showing their tongues, possessed by evil. They

then washed with water and believed themselves virtuous and sanctified.

(227)

Within Jesuit discourse on this matter, what is perhaps most peculiar is that the Jesuits introduced these anti-colonial movements into the written record via the label of “saintliness” (*santidade*), despite their vehement claims condemning their diabolical acts.

Vainfas has commented on the ambivalence inherent to the term *santidade* in his book *A heresia dos índios: Catolicismo e rebeldia no Brasil colonial* [*The Heresy of the Indians: Catholicism and Rebellion in Colonial Brazil*], and notes that, from the vantage point of the colonizer/missionary, despite its “saintly” connotation, it was still synonymous with indigenous religion and resistance. This apparent contradiction within the discourse of the colonizer/missionary highlights the porous border between indigenous and European categorizations of spiritual healers and leaders.⁷⁸ In fact, the recognition of indigenous-led movements as *santidades* by colonists and missionaries is another sign of the power and authority that the *caraíba* (often translated into Portuguese as *santo*) continued to exercise despite Jesuit attempts at “spiritual conquest.”

As we read Cardim’s letter from Bahia (1585) “against the grain,” the letter shows that, despite Cardim’s representation of Brazil as “um novo Portugal” [a new Portugal]—full of abundant resources ripe for missionaries and colonists alike—, the Portuguese stronghold over newly formed colonial communities was precarious at best. Jesuits were very careful about what they wrote down, knowing full well that these words would circulate among the Order and their larger political circles, and, if the proper care was not

⁷⁸ See Vainfas, *A heresia dos índios: Catolicismo e rebeldia no Brasil colonial*, 62-5.

taken, it was quite likely that their words would come back to haunt them later. This point becomes particularly salient in Cardim's letter as we turn a critical eye to the silences in his letter regarding the *Santidade de Jaguaripe* (1580-1585), a movement large enough to garner the attention of the first Inquisitorial visit to Brazil (1591).

In order to contextualize Cardim's significant omission, I want to return to Loyola's letter "To Peter Faber" (1542) to highlight important conventions particular to Loyola's epistolary theory. In his letter, he wrote:

I recall having frequently spoken to you, and when you were away of having often written, to the end that each of the members of the Society should, when they write to us here, write out a *principal letter* which can be shown to others; that is to anyone at all. We do not dare show some letters to friendly eyes who wish to see them, because of their lack of order and irrelevant things they contain. (62)

Within the parameters that Loyola outlines above, it is clear that these letters may be used for political purposes. To this end Loyola recommends that the brothers make sure to edit their work, either by writing the letter a second time or having it written by another hand "for what appears in writing needs a closer scrutiny than what is merely spoken, the written word remaining as a perpetual witness which cannot be amended or explained away as easily as done in talk" (63).

In another letter to Father Gaspar Berceo (Rome, 1554), Loyola provides additional instructions on the art of letter writing for missionaries, though this letter

would not reach Berceo himself, as he died on 18 October 1553.⁷⁹ Loyola reminds his missionary correspondents that “persons of importance” will be reading these letters,

And since we have observed in persons of quality and understanding that this exerts very good influence on them [the innocent curiosities revealed in the letters], it will be good if in the letters which can be shown to people outside of the Society less time is spent on those things which concern members of the society and more given to matters of general interest.

Otherwise the letters cannot be printed here without serious editing. (326)

Loyola’s reference to the permanence of the written word as “perpetual witness” and his reminder that these letters circulated widely outside of the Order serve as cautionary instructions for the brotherhood to choose their words wisely, given that not all matters of the Company of Jesus were meant to be shared widely.

In his letter from Bahia (1585), Cardim seems to have taken this to heart given his careful elisions of important social and biological changes that took place along the coast. Given the significance of the *Santidade de Jaguaripe* movement and the real threat that it posed to Jesuit power structures in Bahia, it seems strategic that Cardim would exclude these events from his letter detailing the “conhecimento das cousas” [knowledge of the things] of Brazil. In her analysis of letters describing a Jesuit mission to Florida, Anna Brickhouse reminds us to consider Loyola’s epistolary theory in order to understand the rhetorical parameters of the genre. She points out that the letters were expected to fulfill certain requirements, which, in the case of the Jesuits, were determined by Loyola’s

⁷⁹ See *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, (trans. William J. Young, S.J.), 324n2.

interpretation of the *ars dictaminis* of humanistic rhetorical models, which served as dominant modes of political discourse during the Renaissance.⁸⁰ Brickhouse's recognition of the significance of the literary dimensions of Jesuit letter-writing in the case of Don Luis de Velasco requires that we read between the lines as Jesuits engaged with Loyola's epistolary conventions. For Brickhouse, this type of critical reading opens up a space for the "fraught relationships between the spoken and the unspoken, whereby the presence of certain subjects or modes ... may in fact illuminate the untold subject of the larger discussion" (*The Unsettlement of America* 64).

The silences in Cardim's letter are yet another example of the "fraught relationships between the spoken and the unspoken," as signaled by Brickhouse. Thus, as we deconstruct the Jesuit discourse of sorcery in light of indigenous resistance, we must be just as mindful about what was excluded from the official report as we are attentive to the written record. As Jesuit letters from the period demonstrate, the Order's attempts at "spiritual conquest" were met with indigenous resistance, often times spearheaded by the local *pajé/caraíba*. Christians also recognized the power of Amerindian and Africa rituals, which they reveal as they classify these forms of resistance movements as

⁸⁰ For a detailed look at Jesuit letter writing, see Alcir Pécora, "Cartas à segunda escolástica," 373-414. Walter Mignolo also discusses the significance of epistolary correspondence in *The Darker Side of the Renaissance* and notes that: "Letter writing as? a means of communication was a common practice toward the end of the fifteenth century among the humanists. During the sixteenth century it also became a fundamental instrument of administrative control and government. Alphabetic writing and letter writing (*epistola*) as a genre had at the time a long history in the West and during the process of colonization generated numerous communicative situations that were narrated in hundreds of anecdotes ranging from colonial Peru to colonial Nouvelle France (Canada)" (172). In fact, nautical trade networks served as the first world wide web of communication; although with ships as the transmitters, the circuit was, of course, much slower and less dependable than today's version.

“sanctities.” In the following section, I continue to assess the semantic implications of the terms *santidade* and *santo* in these cross-cultural encounters to demonstrate the complex web that emerges at the intersection of ritual, the power to heal, and competing discourses of spiritual authority in colonial Brazil. As we will see, in their quest to convert pagan souls, Jesuits continued to spread death and disease well into the seventeenth century as missionaries infiltrated the *sertão*, the hinterlands of Brazil’s interior region. As a result, many natives struggled to understand their relationship to their own gods, as Jesuit baptism, and the subsequent spread of disease, came to be seen as a demonstration of the Christian God’s power over their own.

Vieira’s “Annua Da Provincia do Brasil”: the *sertão*, 1624-25

A critical reading of Jesuit missionary António Vieira’s annual letter (1624-25)⁸¹ provides further testimony that corroborates the link between Jesuit intervention in Brazil and the spread of disease among native populations. Vieira’s narrative reveals that, as Jesuits made their way into the *sertão*, native communities continued to be afflicted with sickness and death soon after their arrival. In particular, Vieira wrote of a region in southern Brazil between Rio de Janeiro and São Vicente, just beyond the river known at the time as “Laguna dos Patos” [Lagoon of the Ducks]. In an effort to reach the hundreds of unbaptized souls situated beyond the reach of Jesuit-controlled *aldeias*, Vieira reports

⁸¹ Vieira’s “Annua Da Provincia do Brasil pelo P.^e Antonio Vieira do anno de 1624, e de 1625” is located in the manuscript collection at The John Carter Brown Library, Portuguese ms. 1.

that two missionaries left from the College of Rio in 1624 and set up a small house, thirty or forty leagues from the principle missions,⁸² “onde pudessem dizer missa, e dahi mais comodam.^{te} tratar com esta gente, assim de [os] reduzir, e ajuntar a todos em hu[m] lugar, onde recebendo o Sagrado Baptismo, vivessem Christãm.^{te}, porque he impossivel fazerem-no, estando tam divididos” [where they would be able to give mass, and from there engage with these people, to reduce them like this, and put them all together in one place, where they would live like Christians, receiving the Sacred Baptism, because it is impossible for them to do it [with the natives] being so divided] (folio 63).⁸³

As the missionaries gave lessons about what the sanctity of baptism meant for the Christian faith and what was required for it, they threatened that unbaptized souls would suffer the “penas do Inferno” [pains of hell], which would be the fate of those resistant to conversion.⁸⁴ Jesuits argued, however, that they offered a path away from this hell to the “bens da Gloria” [gains of the glory] of God and promised that baptism was the first step to eternal salvation (folio 64). If Vieira’s tallies can be trusted, hundreds of natives located in the villages along the route taken by the two missionaries did, in fact, choose to be baptized. In the first village that the missionaries encountered, for example, Vieira writes that,

⁸² See Vieira 1625, folios 62-3.

⁸³ In my transcriptions of Vieira’s annual letter (1625-5), I have been as faithful to the original as possible, only expanding abbreviated words to clarify meaning. I indicate these interventions with brackets. All translations from Portuguese to English are my own.

⁸⁴ See Vieira 1625, folio 63.

[e]m espasio de oito dias foram sufficientem.^{te} cathequizados, e receberam a agua do Sagrado Baptismo quasi duzentas almas. E tal afeicam tomaram depois de serem baptizados ás cousas Divinas, que morando muitos deles hu[m]a legoa distantes da Igr.^a continuaram com m.^{to} fervor a ouvir Missa todos os dias Santos, ainda em tempo de grandes frios, e chuvas, e nam basta[n]te a declaração que se lhes fez, de ficarem total.^{te} desobrigados. (folio 64)

in the space of eight days [the Indians] were sufficiently catechized, and nearly two hundred souls received the water of the Sacred Baptism. And, after being baptized, they took such affection to Divine things, that, many of them living one league away from the Church, they continued to listen to Mass of all of the Saints with great fervor, even times of great cold and rains, even in spite of the declaration that was made to them, that they were totally not obliged.

In this excerpt, Vieira depicts the success enjoyed by the missionaries, as the new converts' listened "to Mass of all of the Saints with great fervor" despite the fact "that they were totally not obliged." As we have seen, Jesuit baptisms *en masse* had an essential impact on the spread of European-born disease and surely played a part in the willingness of natives to convert. Missionary writings often claim that the natives understood the unprecedented amount of sickness as a sign that their own gods had abandoned them.

Moreover, Jesuits write that, in these biological exchanges, natives reasoned that the missionary's ability to inflict sicknesses onto indigenous bodies was demonstrative of their God-given power. We see this in Vieira's narrative, for example, when the traveling missionaries made it to their final stop in the village of Caybê and, "Chegados finalm.^{te} a esta ultima Aldea, começaram a tratar de seu intento principal, que era ajuntalos em hu[m]a Igreja" [[having] finally arrived at this last *aldeia*, they began to speak about their principal intent, which was to group them together in a Church] (folio 66). Vieira reports that his brothers became frustrated with the leader of Caybê, a "grande feiticeiro, e lhe tem dito o Demonio, que no ponto, em que os nossos entrarem em suas terras, nam teram efeito suas artes" [great sorcerer, and the Devil had told him, that at the point, in which our brothers entered into their lands, his arts would not be effective] (folio 66). But, despite the Devil's protests against the missionaries' entrance into Caybê, the brothers insisted that "haviam de por em execuçam os mandados de seus Mayores, que eram de passarem adiante" [they were required to execute the order of their superiors, which were to continue forward], and they pushed on ahead (folio 66). This is not the only instance in which Vieira documented a similar perspective held by native leaders in which Amerindians reasoned that Christian baptism resulted in a break with their gods.⁸⁵

As Vieira turned his attention to the "Missam dos Mares Verdes" [Mission of the Green Seas], he notes the trail of disease that followed the Jesuits. In this episode Vieira writes that, in the case of the "Índios Paranaubês," "Em quanto nos aparelhamos foi a

⁸⁵ Ramón A. Gutiérrez (*When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away*) reports a similar logic held by Pueblo groups of New Mexico as they worked to make sense out of European conquest and colonization in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (40-4).

Aldea molestada de muitas doenças, que particularm.^{te} davam nas crianças, e taes que m. morreram, as mais delas baptizadas...” [As soon as we set up, the village was bothered with many sicknesses, which were particularly prevalent among the children, and such that many died, the majority of them baptized] (folio 72). As indigenous people tried to make sense of unprecedented amounts of sickness, which they took as a sign that the Christian God was winning out over their own deities, they went to missionaries and begged them to save their children from the sickness that they had brought upon them, “[p]araque eles lhes dessem saúde: que o que he mais para dar graças á Divina bond.^e ...” [so that they could bring them health: which is more to give thanks to Divine goodness] (folio 72). Vieira also reports that, “[f]oram os nossos sempre tratados dos Indios, e venerados como homens vindos do Ceo ... e confiassem nestes m.^{to}, porque eram homens santos, e seus libertadores...” [our own were always treated by the Indians and venerated as saintly men, and their liberators] (folio 73). Given the bias that informed Jesuit writers broadly speaking, it is difficult to know whether or not Vieira’s claims that the missionaries “were always treated and venerated as men having arrived from heaven” were accurate, given that they were careful to represent themselves in a positive light as “saintly men” and “liberators” for their readers.

The semantic implications embedded within native categorizations of Jesuit missionaries as “homens santos” reveal a complex milieu of healers and spiritual leaders in colonial Brazil. In an effort to blend the multiple religious frameworks at play, Jesuit reports document that natives (as well as Jesuits) often times interchanged the term *santo* with *pajé* or *caraíba*, given that the two terms overlapped in the sense that they both

referred to an individual with a supernatural ability to manipulate the spiritual world in order to manifest divine will on earth; and, as we will see, this idea of the *santo* was applied to both Christian and non-Christian ritual specialists in this context.⁸⁶ In his report from the College of Bahia, for example, Vieira wrote of a particularly noteworthy missionary, considered to be a “santo” by natives because he healed through miraculous means: Brother Antonio Fernandes, native to the Island of Madeira, a temporal curate who entered the Company of Jesus at the age of nineteen in the year 1615.⁸⁷

Fernandes served as a healer at the College of Bahia, and, in his accolades of his fellow brother, Vieira writes that “[p]ara todos achava mesinhas, a todos acudia, a todos visitava. Finalm.^{te}, fazia tudo a todos com tal espirito, que ainda os mesmos Indios, com serem menos entendidos, se nam escondia, e lhe chamava Santo” [He found local medicines for all, he helped everyone, and visited everyone. Finally, he did everything

⁸⁶ See Charlotte de Castelnau-L’Estoile, “The Uses of Shamanism in Seventeenth-Century Brazil,” 616-37. In this essay, she takes the case study of the socio-religious crossovers of Francisco Pinto—a Jesuit missionary in Brazil that many natives regarded as a *caraíba* (known for his ability to summon rain)—as an example of the transculturation that characterized missionary interactions with Amerindians. With regard to the use of the word “saint” in Brazil, Castelnau-L’Estoile finds that, “In sixteenth-century Brazil, it had two meanings—the traditional Christian one, in which a saint was an intercessor between mortals and the Lord, and also the meaning embodied in the *caraíba*. Indeed, the Jesuits called the Tupí prophetic movements ‘santidade’ and they translated the word *caraíba* into ‘santos’” (623). She argues that these linguistic crossovers are a result of (controversial) conversion techniques that translate indigenous sacred concepts to Christian ones, and concludes that, “Pinto’s story illustrated the Jesuits’ great faculty for transforming and adapting themselves to different worlds. Nevertheless, this missionary crossed the line: he entered the Indian world. His uncommon example shows how the undertaking to evangelize the lowest barbarians, as they were called in Acosta’s terminology, could sometimes have an adverse impact on the Europeans” (631).

⁸⁷ See Vieira 1625, folio 5.

for everyone with such spirit, that even the Indians themselves, given that were less versed in reason, if they did not hide themselves, they called him Saint] (folio 6). Vieira pointed out that they—the “Indians” that Vieira describes as “less versed in reason”—chose this term specifically because “Nam só curava com remedios humanos os seus enfermos, mas igualm.^{te} lhes applicava os Divinos, fazendo devoções particulares por cada hu[m]: a assim fa-fazia [fazia] curas mais que naturaes...” [Not only did he cure the sick people [in his care], but he also used Divine remedies for them, doing particular devotions for each one: and like this he provided cures that were more than natural] (folio 6).

While Vieira implies that the “Indios” use the word *santo* to describe Fernandes due to a lack of understanding of the Christian term, this use becomes even more complicated if we return to Anchieta’s letter from Piratininga (April 1557). In this letter, Anchieta also refers to a “grande santo,” but in this case he writes of a local *pajé* in the *sertão* with many followers who “andam de cá pera lá, deixando suas propias casas” [go on from here to there, leaving their own houses] (99). In this instance, Anchieta’s use of the word *santo* shows that both natives and missionaries used the term interchangeably to refer to the supernatural abilities of healers and spiritual leaders, a sign that spiritual communities in Brazil were a localized congruence of European and Tupi/Tapuia elements.⁸⁸ Through the different deployments of the term *santo* in these case studies, we find that, on the one hand, natives found similarities between the duties and rituals of the

⁸⁸ These spiritual communities would no doubt have included African healers and spiritual leaders as well. This research, however, falls outside the scope of this essay.

Christian *santo* and their own understandings of the *pajé* or *caraíba*. On the other hand, Anchieta's use of the term *santo* to refer to a powerful *pajé* in the *sertão* gestures to the fact that Jesuits recognized the continued spiritual power and authority held by the local healers and spiritual leaders, despite Jesuit attempts to undermine their good standing within native communities.

As we have seen, the continued power of the *pajé* or *caraíba* is evident, for example, in the persistence of indigenous-led resistance movements (*santidades*). In these migratory patterns, indigenous communities chose to abandon their territories in search of *terras sem males* [lands without evil] in which they would be led to immortality and eternal rest. In preparation for this journey, they would smoke tobacco (a ritual form of communicating with the spiritual realm), engage in ritual dance, and recite sacred songs and commemorative myths. Through this ceremony, the participants would articulate their belief in the destruction of the world with the promise of a new land without evil within the physical realm in order to project these sentiments spiritually. Prior to European intervention in Brazil, these movements were often linked to the ecological impact of natural phenomenon such as floods and droughts—due to the deterioration or infertility of soil—as well as to social and religious circumstances.⁸⁹

In his *A construção do Brasil*, Couto notes that the general structure of Tupi mythology included cosmic myths of destruction prior to European colonial intervention, initiated either by fire or a great flood, as well as astral myths that interpreted eclipses as

⁸⁹ See Couto *A construção do Brasil*, 109-17.

attempts by a great jaguar to devour the moon.⁹⁰ However, we find that the case studies from colonial Brazil demonstrate that, in the post contact era, the notion of *terras sem males* acquired new significance, as indigenous peoples tried to make sense of the epidemic devastation that afflicted their communities. In the case of the *Paranaubês*, for example, Vieira writes that, “o Principal” [the principal leader] encouraged the village to put “[f]ogo ás casas, e começaram a caminhar sem mostra algu[m]a ainda de tristeza por deixarem sua Patria” [fire to the houses, and they began to walk without a sign of sadness for having left their fatherland] (folio 73). He wrote that they actually did this “com muito alegria, porque livrando-se dela, se livram das mãos do Demonio: do qual ente[n]diam, que eram perseguidos, e ao mesmo atribuiam as doenças, que na Aldea padeceram depois da chegada dos Padres, dizendo, que se queria vingar, porque se apartavam dele” [with great happiness, because freeing themselves from [the land], they liberated themselves from the hands of the Devil: from which they believed that they were persecuted, and to the same end they attributed their ailments, that they suffered in the village after the arrival of the Fathers, saying that [the Devil] wanted to avenge himself, because they separated themselves from him] (folio 73).

In this instance, Vieira finds it peculiar that, “nam se arrependem com isto, nem lhes vir ao pensam.^{to}, que aquele mal se lhes pegara dos nossos ... antes daqui tomavam ocasiam para ter suas terras por mui doentias, e as deixare[m] mais depressa” [they did not repent with this, nor did they come to the realization, that that evil had come upon them from our own ... before they took occasion from here to take their lands as very

⁹⁰ Couto, Op.cit., 110-112.

sickly, and they left them most quickly] (folios 72-3). As Vainfas has argued, Tupi millenarian migrations were adapted and changed post encounter in response to a new colonial reality. Vainfas explains that, “what matters is the change in the *caraíbas*’ prophetic message as their hostility towards Portuguese colonialism grew. Their inciting war and the search for a ‘land of immortality’ appear to be associated with the struggle against the Catholic priests and the slave owners” (“From Indian Millenarianism to a Tropical Witches’ Sabbath” 219). And, he goes on to say that: “This hostility became so strong that it became a major obstacle to Portuguese expansion along the Brazilian coast. In the end, the Indians’ idolatrous ceremony became a war against colonialism” (219). What we see in the case of the *Paranaubís*, however, represents another side to this story, and shows that some indigenous leaders felt that their own gods had abandoned them, and, for this reason, they understood their “lands as very sickly, and they left them most quickly.”

What becomes clear, then, is that the notion of the *santidade* in the context of colonial Brazil is the product of several layers of cross-cultural exchange between Amerindians, Africans, and Europeans. First and foremost, the organization of the *santidades* was constructed based upon pre-contact indigenous beliefs: in indigenous culture, these movements were part of a larger mythological structure. Paradoxically, despite their “saintliness,” the semantic implications of these terms positioned native healers and spiritual leaders as heretics within the theologically charged jurisprudence of the colonizer, a discourse that served as part of the legal framework that justified the

evangelization, domination, and exploitation of non-Christian populations.⁹¹ The Jesuits also documented incidents in which missionaries—also called “santos” by natives in some instances—relied on spiritual intervention to cure the sick and battle the Devil in a similar ritual capacity to native healers and spiritual leaders. However, when this type of healing was done at the hands of the missionaries, these instances were recorded as miracles and were not demonized in the same vein as they were when performed by native practitioners, despite the fact that their ritual tactics were similar. In another instance of ambivalence, we see that Jesuit missionaries also used the term *santo* to refer to native healers and spiritual leaders that maintained their spiritual authority in spite of Jesuit missionary intervention and the demographic devastation caused by the spread of European disease.⁹²

Conclusion

As we have seen, Jesuit intervention in the spiritual realm of the Tupi and Tapuia also spilled over into their physical world as missionaries systematically worked to restructure the relationship between local communities and native healers and spiritual leaders. Ultimately, we find that Jesuit missionaries tried to combat the continued spiritual authority that the *pajé* and *caraíba* maintained among locals. In their response to what they perceived to be an oppositional threat, Jesuits demonized native resistance via

⁹¹ See Myscowski, *Amazons, Wives, Nuns & Witches*, 198.

⁹² Clastres (*The Land-Without-Evil*) confirms this observation, highlighting that, “The Jesuits themselves believed them to have an exorbitant power: not only did the Jesuits affirm that they had many times witnessed the truth of the prophets’ predictions, but they also believed them to be able to work demonic miracles: suddenly drying out a river or a pond, or, conversely, making waters swell and cause catastrophic inundations” (30)

their discourse of sorcery, which ultimately inscribed native healers and leaders into the Western archive as agents of the devil, and justified the Order's attempts at "spiritual conquest." Jesuit letters from the initial stage of colonization reveal the social and biological impact that the unprecedented spread of Old World disease had on local Tupi and Tapuia communities. On the one hand, to explain the undeniable correlation between Christian baptism and the spread of disease among native populations, Jesuits reasoned that these deaths were a gift from God—that these "gentile" souls would revert back to their pagan customs and miss out on eternal salvation if they lived. On the other hand, indigenous leaders took this as a possible sign that their own sacred deities had forsaken them.

In Vieira's annual letter from 1624 and 1625, we see that the Jesuits continued to spread death and disease as they pushed their mission even deeper into the *sertão*. As healers worked to treat those infected on both sides of the spiritual divide, missionaries were eager to unearth local medicines to supplement European stockpiles. Many Tupi and Tapuia healers and spiritual leaders resisted Portuguese colonization, as was true in the case of the *santidade* movements, though, as Cardim's letter from Bahia (1585) suggests, Jesuits were hesitant to record these events in much detail. In response to the continued spiritual power and medical authority of native healers and spiritual leaders—as I have demonstrated through a critical reading of Jesuit missionary writings in colonial Brazil—Cardim, like his fellow missionaries, also relied on the discourse of sorcery with its implied connotations of idolatry and heresy to systematically demonize the *pajé/caraíba*. The next chapter will continue to assess Jesuit discourse on indigenous

plants and healing techniques to deconstruct the geo-political implications of Cardim's appropriation of indigenous knowledge in his *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brazil* (1583-1601).

Chapter 2

Appropriating Indigenous Knowledge in Sixteenth-century Brazil: Fernão Cardim's

Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil

On 5 March 1583, Portuguese Jesuit Fernão Cardim set sail on the *Chagas de São Francisco* along with 136 other passengers that departed from the port city of Lisbon with the intent to settle in Brazil. The trip took a total of sixty-six days, with a ten-day stop on the island of Madeira. Cardim accompanied Father Cristovão de Gouveia—Visiting Father from 1583-1589—as secretary to the mission. In a letter from Bahia (1585), Cardim details his journey in his travels up and down the coast of Brazil; between the years 1583 and 1585, he made his way through Bahia, Ilhéus, Porto Seguro, Pernambuco, Espírito Santo, Rio de Janeiro, and São Vicente. In accordance with the parameters set forth by Loyola for missionary correspondence, Cardim writes to the provincial father of Portugal, Sebastião de Morais (1580-1588) to assure him that:

Nesta com o favor divino darei conta a Vossa Reverência da nossa viagem e missão a esta província do Brasil, e determino contar todo o principal que nos tem sucedido, não somente na viagem, mas também em todo o tempo da visita que Vossa Reverência tenha maior conhecimento das cousas desta província, e para maior consolação minha, porque em tudo

desejo comunicar-me com Vossa Reverência e mais padres e irmão desta
Província. (211)

In this [letter], with divine favor, I will give Your Reverence an account of
our voyage and mission to this province of Brazil. I have set out to relate
the main events that have happened to us, not only during the voyage but
also for the entirety of our visit so that Your Reverence will have the
greatest knowledge of the things which make up this province, and also
for my own consolation, because, above all else I desire to communicate
with Your Reverence and the other fathers and brothers of this province.⁹³

In his promise to provide an account of his newfound “knowledge of things” in Brazil,
Cardim begins his letter with details of his voyage across the Atlantic from Portugal,
which he supplements with a general description of the day-to-day activities of Gouveia’s
visit to Brazil.

In addition to regular epistolary correspondence, Jesuits put together larger
natural histories to document the land and people that missionaries encountered on the
frontier of the Order’s “spiritual conquest” in and around colonial settlements. In this
capacity, Cardim’s treatise serves as a testament to the role that he played as
cosmographer, geographer, ethnographer, zoologist, and botanist—a natural historian
more generally speaking—in his deployment for the Company of Jesus. Eventually, his
manuscript would come to be known as the *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil*

⁹³ All translations from Portuguese to English are my own in this chapter. For all primary
sources, I have supplied the original Portuguese. For secondary sources originally in
Portuguese but translated into English, I have supplied the English translation only as a
matter of economy.

[*Treatise on the Land and People of Brazil*] (1583-1601). To understand the significance of Cardim's treatise at the time of its composition, it is necessary to take a careful look into the history of the manuscript itself. Cardim primarily compiled his documents on Brazil during his travels along the coast, and we can be certain that there were no additions made after the year 1601, given that English corsair Frances Cooke of Dartmouth confiscated the manuscripts, which he sold to Richard Hakluyt in London soon thereafter. The treatise was printed for the first time in its entirety for an Anglican audience in volume XVI of *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes: Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Land Travells by Englishmen and others* (London 1625), edited by Samuel Purchas, published by "William Stansby for Henrie Fetherstone [...] to be sold at his shop in Pauls Church-yard, at the signe of the Rose."⁹⁴

Cardim, caught in these inter-imperial crosshairs, began his transatlantic voyage in October 1582, when he left his post as minister of the Jesuit College of Évora to head to Lisbon to prepare for his mission trip to Brazil. Cardim and Gouveia spent five months in Lisbon fine-tuning their mission strategy: between 1583 and 1590 they would tour

⁹⁴Purchas published the first volume of his four-volume collection of *Pilgrimages* in 1613 and continued the project through 1626: all of the editions between the years 1613 and 1626 were published by William Stansby for Henrie Fetherstone, "to be sold at his shop in Pauls Church-yard, at the signe of the Rose." Initially, Purchas's works were not widely used among his Anglican contemporaries. Starting in the 1620s and 1630s, and throughout the seventeenth century, however, English writers began to use his work for general histories in the interest of colonial politics and economics: see, for example, Captain John Smith, *Sea grammar* (1627); Samuel Clarke, *Geographical description of all the countries in the known world* (1657); and Thomas Philipot, *The original and growth of the Spanish monarchy* (1664). In addition to these texts that specifically reference Purchas, there are several others that are said to have drawn from his work as well. On the history of the use of Purchas' texts as reference material for future early modern authors, see L.E. Pennington's "Samuel Purchas: His reputation and the uses of his works," 3-13.

Brazil to give confession, perform mass baptism rituals, and officiate Christian marriage ceremonies.⁹⁵ For both the Company of Jesus as well as the Iberian Crown, the conversion and reduction of indigenous people was key to the larger colonial project. To aid in this endeavor, Cardim—along with many of his fellow missionaries—compiled extensive documents with general information on the land and people of Brazil. The Company of Jesus was invested in this type of knowledge production, given that it served the brotherhood as a how-to manual for evangelization and colonial settlement.

In 1598, the provincial congregation in Rome elected Cardim as *Procurador* of the province of Brazil; this required that Cardim return to Europe to handle certain administrative duties related to his new post. It would not be long, however, until Cardim attempted his return voyage to Brazil: on 24 September 1601, he embarked upon the *San Vicente* with Father João Madureira (the appointed *Visitador* at the time) along with fifteen other Jesuits. Their voyage was cut short, and, in a dangerous turn of events, the

⁹⁵ We have two letters from Cardim that serve as documentation of his first mission trip in Brazil from 1583-1590, both written from Bahia: the first was dated on 16 October 1585, and the second on 1 May 1590. In the letter from Bahia, 16 October 1585, Cardim explains that, after he met with Gouveia in Lisbon, the two joined together along with Jesuit brother Manuel Telles Barreto, a fellow missionary that also served the duration of Gouveia's mission. The three Jesuit brothers spent five months negotiating the parameters of the mission with various high-ranking Church officials. According to Cardim, "O padre visitador tratou por vezes com alguns prelados e letrados casos de muita importância sobre os cativeiros, baptismos e casamentos dos índios e escravos da Guiné, de cujas resoluções se seguiu grande fruto e aumento da cristandade depois que chegámos ao Brasil" [The visiting father discussed at length with some high-ranking officials cases of great importance regarding slavery, baptisms, and marriages of the Indians and the slaves of Guinea, from whose resolutions were followed by the great fruit and increase of Christianity when we arrived to Brazil] (212). It is difficult to assess whether or not Cardim wrote these words cognizant of the extent to which captivity, baptism, and marriage rituals would be fruitful for the Order, but they played a large role in the reconfiguration of population geographies and kinship structures in colonial Brazil.

San Vicente sailed off course into English waters. The ship crossed paths with English corsairs, who took possession of the ship after a full day's battle; on 25 September 1601, what was left of the crew and passengers on board the *San Vicente* surrendered to Captain Francis Cooke of Dartmouth. Cooke took Jesuit missionaries Cardim and Madureira into captivity, along with four others. While Madureira would never make it back on dry land (he died at sea on 5 October 1601), Cardim was taken to England and imprisoned at the Gatehouse in London, where he remained until 1603.⁹⁶ We have a letter written by Cardim from Brussels dated from 7 May 1603 from which we can deduce that Cardim eventually managed to negotiate his freedom from English captivity, though, much to his dismay, he would never regain the manuscripts that he had compiled on the land and people of Brazil.⁹⁷ In 1604 Cardim finally made it back to Brazil, where he served as provincial in the region until 1609, taking the place of Pero Rodrigues. Cardim would spend the remainder of his life in and around Salvador, Bahia.

⁹⁶ On the circulation of Cardim's manuscript, as well as his letters, see Maria de Azevedo's introduction to her edition of *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil* (12-3). On Cardim's letters written from London, see Serafim Leite, *História da Companhia de Jesus no Brasil*, vol. VIII, Rio de Janeiro, Instituto Nacional do Livro, 132-137 (Azevedo 13n12). The letters are currently held at the British Museum, in the *Hatfield Papers* in *Historical Manuscripts Commission Reports* as well as at the Hatfield House (13n12). On the pirating of Cardim's manuscript at the hands of the English, see Voigt, *Writing Captivity in the Early Modern Atlantic*, 263-76.

⁹⁷ See *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil*, eds. Baptista Caetano, Capistrano de Abreu, Rodolfo Garcia: "Da Inglaterra Cardim devia ter passado a Bruxellas antes de 7 de Maio de 1603, porque um documento desse logar e data, pertencente aos Schetz da capitania de São Vicente e dado à estampa por Alcebiades Furtado, nas Publicações do Archivo Nacional, vol. XIV (1914)..." (14-15).

In his annual letter from Brazil (1624 and 1625), Jesuit António Vieira writes of a sickness that passed through the College of Bahia.⁹⁸ He reports that, “Destes enfermos passou a melhor vida o P.^e Fernam Cardim natural de Viana de Alvito, Arcebisado de Evora ... varam verdadeiram.^{te} Religioso, e de vida inculpavel, mui afavel, e benigno, em especial para com seus súbditos” [Of these sick, the best life passed, Father Fernão Cardim natural of Viana de Alvito, Archbishop of Evora ... a truly religious man, and of an inculpable life, very affable, and benign, especially with his subjects] (folio 2). In particular, Vieira notes that, “Estendia-se esta sua caridade aos de fóra, como experimentaram, e mais particularm.^{te} os presos da cadea, e os pobres do Hospital; porque estes visitava a miudo, remediando suas necessid.^{es} com esmolas” [His charity was extended to outsiders, as they experienced, particularly prisoners of the jail, and the poor things from the hospital; because he visited them often, remedying their necessities with alms] (folio 3).⁹⁹ As Vieira’s eulogy demonstrates, Cardim was an integral part of the missionary community at the College of Bahia.

⁹⁸ Also see chapter one for more on Vieira’s annual letter (1624-5).

⁹⁹ At the College of Bahia in Brazil, Vieira’s description of Cardim’s missionary work echoes the principles under which St. Ignatius of Loyola founded the Order. On the importance of the Company of Jesus in Portugal in the early years, Alden (*The Making of an Enterprise*) explains that, “Shortly after the arrival of the ‘Roman Fathers,’ as these first Jesuits were initially called, they gained a private audience with John III and his wife, Catarina de Austria, who treated them ‘with a great display of benevolence.’ The king ... quickly became a great admirer of the Ignatians, as did members of his court, including his brothers, the infantes D. Luis (b. 1506-d. 1555) and D. Henrique, later Cardinal Henry (b. 1512-d. 1580). After conversations with the new fathers, observation of their self-effacing, saintly characters, and the receipt of reports concerning their energetic spiritual work in Lisbon’s hospitals and prisons, the king referred to them as ‘the apostles,’ the appellation Jesuits would employ in reference to themselves for centuries to come. Not surprisingly, John III told one of his nobles that he would like to

In this same vein, Vieira laments Cardim's passing and highlights the centrality of his role at the college, as he writes that, "Faleceo com grande dor, e sentim.^{to} de todos, por se verem juntam.^{te} orfãos de Pai ... nele tudo tinham; porque como Pai os criara com a sua doutrina, e exemplo; e como [alguem] piedosa intranhavelm.^{te} os amara" [He died with great pain, and sentiment from all, because they saw themselves jointly as orphans of [this] Father... in him they had it all; because he raised them as a Father with his doctrine, and example; and as a pious person he loved them from his core] (folio 4). Finally, after his laudatory remarks, Vieira concludes that: "Entrou na Comp.^a no ano de 1556 de 15 anos de id.^e: viveo nela 60, e faleceo de setenta e cinco aos 27 de Janr.^o de 1625" [He entered the Company in the year 1556 at the age of 15: he lived in the Order 60 [years], and he died at 75 on 27 January 1625] (folio 5).

Though not recognized as such in his own lifetime, Cardim's work represents one of the most significant archival sources for sixteenth-century indigenous studies on Brazil. When Cardim put pen to paper at the end of the sixteenth century, he recorded a significant amount of ethnic and linguistic variation among coastal Tupi populations. He identified, by name, roughly one hundred different nations. While migratory movements caused by ecological, social, and spiritual factors were common, many kinship systems were primarily place-based.¹⁰⁰ For example, Cardim identifies several larger families with established settlements, such as the *Caribe*, *Aruaque*, and *Araúá*. He also notes the localization of several smaller communities situated in the northern zones of the Amazon,

have their entire Society come to his kingdom, even if that were to cost him part of his empire" (26).

¹⁰⁰ See Couto, *A construção do Brasil*, 51-6.

such as the *Guaicuru*, *Nambiquara*, *Txapacura*, *Pano*, *Mura*, and *Catuaquina*. Apart from these primary groups, some communities remained more isolated, and have been identified as the *Aricapu*, *Auaquê*, *Irantche*, *Jabuti*, *Canoe*, *Coiá*, and *Trumai*, among others.¹⁰¹ Despite the diversity in the region, Cardim divided Brazilian natives into ethnic categories based on the two primary languages spoken among native populations: Tupi and Gê. These linguistic associations most likely emerged from regional trade relations, which eventually served as cultural markers that separated Tupi populations from the Tapuia for European observers. The Jesuits homogenized Tupi speakers, who primarily occupied the coastal regions in southern Brazil, into the larger Tupi nation that we know today,¹⁰² and classified Gê-speaking communities—mainly inhabiting the *sertão* and the northern regions of Brazil—as the Tapuia.

Missionaries took great care to document local language and culture on the frontier of Iberian imperial expansion. For his part, Cardim provides an in-depth survey of the local rites, customs, and practices of indigenous people, information that aided the Jesuit enterprise in their Brazilian missions. In order to understand the larger implications of Cardim's treatise, I dedicate this chapter to an analysis of the way in which Cardim discursively reconfigures Brazilian landscapes to fit within Christian cosmological parameters. I take a critical look at the way in which Cardim's narrative extracts local knowledge of the natural world for Jesuit profit as he simultaneously projects Old World myths to impose pseudo-scientific theories of moral degeneration onto Brazilian

¹⁰¹ See Cardim (trans. Azevedo), *Tratados*, 192-207.

¹⁰² Tupi populations often allied with Jesuit missionaries (in contrast with the Tapuia) and, based on this contact, Jesuit missionary José de Anchieta instituted Tupi—a general language comprised of various native dialects—in his first grammar of Tupi (1595).

landscapes. In these projections, Cardim applies theories of Aristotelian natural philosophy and Galenic physiology to argue that American stars and ecosystems were corrupt by nature. According to this early modern climate theory, Europeans argued that, because of the negative impact of tropical climate on human bodies, Amerindians were not fit to govern themselves. As postcolonial scholars have demonstrated, this rhetoric is a central feature in European writings that support colonial settlement through the larger discourse of discovery.¹⁰³ Finally, I conclude my study of Cardim's *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil* by tracing the manuscript to the "signe of the rose in Paul's Churchyard," home to the principal printing district in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century London, England. As the manuscript's transatlantic circulation suggests, eventually, this wealth of ethnographic and botanical was deemed useful by one of the Hapsburgs' imperial rivals, the English, as well. In the following section, I analyze the way in which Cardim appropriates Tupi medicinal knowledge to take a closer look at both what

¹⁰³ On the juridical implications of the Doctrine of Discovery in European law, see Robert J. Miller and Micheline D'Angelis, "Brazil, Indigenous Peoples, and the International Law of Discovery," 1-36; also see Margarita Zamora (*Reading Columbus*) in which she outlines the contractual pragmatics that underwrite colonial documents based, beginning with Christopher Columbus's first letters of "discovery." In her study of gender and the discourse of discovery, Zamora argues that, "The Discover thus is inscribed in a gendered discourse defined by a contradiction: desire for the Other cohabits with a profound sense of alienation from difference. As in Van der Straet's allegory of the first encounter between Europeans and Amerindians, just beyond the inviting of the feminine Other lies the body of the self dismembered—a warning of the dangers of contact. Yearning for the ideal continually alternates with denigration of that which is deemed barbarous, in other words, alien and inferior. Columbus's "Indies"—a feminized and ultimately eroticized sign, desired and reviled—was inscribed into the Columbian exchange as a feminine value, intended for consumption in a cultural economy where discovery means gaining an advantage and uncovering weakness, and femininity is synonymous with exploitability" (179).

European empires were competing for and how they found it in their race to colonize the Americas.

Cardim's Appropriation of Tupi Medicine

As missionaries observed native rites and traditions, they found an extensive archive of medical knowledge. Early on in their missions, Jesuits focused on the documentation of this vast store of native pharmacopeia, as it was a central component that sustained the Order's network of missionaries.¹⁰⁴ Despite their demonization of Amerindian healers and spiritual leaders, it is evident that missionaries depended on indigenous sources for information on local medicinal plants; we can deduce this, for example, from Cardim's documentation of native flora and fauna in Tupi (and not Portuguese or Latin) in *Tratados da terra e gente do Brasil*. A side-by-side reading of Cardim's treatise and fellow missionary Jesuit José de Anchieta's text *Informação do Brasil*¹⁰⁵ reveals that the two texts are closely related. There are different theories regarding who borrowed what from whom,¹⁰⁶ but with regard to the case of native

¹⁰⁴ Because of their central role in the administration of health and wellness, missionaries looked to native *pajé* or *caraíba* as the source of this information, who served as healers and spiritual leaders in their communities. The role of the *pajé* in Tupi society was significant within the frame of Tupi belief systems (and for Jesuit observation) because they were the transmitters of skills, rites, and social customs. See Couto, *A construção do Brasil*, 110. Also see Clastres, *The Land-Without-Evil*, 28-9.

¹⁰⁵ See chapter 1 for a more in-depth look at Anchieta's larger body of work in the context of Jesuit missionaries in Brazil in the initial phases of contact.

¹⁰⁶ In his edited version of *Cartas, Informações, Fragmentos Historicos e Sermões do Padre Joseph de Anchieta* (1933), S.J., Pedro Luís argues (against Capistrano de Abreu) that it is more probable that Anchieta borrows from Cardim's *Narrativa epistolar* (1585) in his own *Breve narração* (incorrectly dated from 1584), given that Anchieta's narrative contained information that only Cardim would have known at the time of its conception

medicine, it seems probable that Cardim adopted this information from Anchieta's previous work (and not the other way around), given the latter's familiarity with medicine and the Tupi language.¹⁰⁷ Anchieta served as a primary local contact for Cardim and Gouveia in their visiting mission, known for his grammatical work on Tupi as well as for his ability to heal. In fact, when Cardim arrived in Rio de Janeiro in 1583, he was gravely ill; Anchieta is reported to have cured him with a "mezinha" [local medicine],¹⁰⁸ understood as a miraculous healing event within the brotherhood.¹⁰⁹

due to geographic logistics (437n546). A careful reading of Cardim's *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil* alongside Anchieta's *Informações, Fragmentos Historicos e Sermões*, however, indicates that Cardim also borrowed heavily from Anchieta. In this sense, the two brothers borrowed from one another depending on the advantage presented by each text.

¹⁰⁷ In the introduction to her edition of Cardim's *Tratados*, Azevedo highlights the significance of his collaboration with fellow Jesuits as he wrote his treatise: "Uma obra rica que merecia uma maior divulgação em Portugal, a par de outras, como a do seu companheiro José de Anchieta, com quem contactou nas suas viagens pelo território brasileiro e cujos textos se chegam a confundir com os de Cardim. De facto, o Padre Fernão Cardim, pelas circunstâncias da sua vida, ficou entre este e outro jesuíta, António Vieira, formando uma tríade de apóstolos, missionários que educaram os primeiros brasileiros e que defenderam os Ameríndios da escravidão" [A rich work that deserved greater dissemination in Portugal, along with others, such as the work of his partner José de Anchieta, with whom he contacted in his voyages through the Brazilian territory and whose texts have come to be confused with those of Cardim. In fact, Father Fernão Cardim, due to the circumstances of his life, ended up between [Anchieta] and another Jesuit, António Vieira, forming a triad of apostles, missionaries that educated the first Brazilians and that defended the Amerindians from slavery] (10).

¹⁰⁸ Often times Jesuit missionaries would classify certain medicinal plants as *mezinhas*, a diminutive form of *medicina* in Portuguese, which they used to differentiate between American pharmacopeia (*mezinhas*) and European *medicina*. The term *mezinha* has been classified under the umbrella of "folk medicine"; however, I favor "local medicine" in my own translation to work against the evaluation of European medicine as "scientific" while indigenous knowledge is diminished via its classification as "folk."

¹⁰⁹ See the anthology of Anchieta's writing, *Cartas, Informações, Fragmentos Historicos e Sermões*, 286n326.

Missionaries were quick to share and circulate this type of information, given that it supported their missions. In many instances, Jesuits depended on a working knowledge of Brazilian *mezinhas*, which missionaries used to lure native catechumens to their reductions, and thus as a mechanism for conversion. In the Jesuit distinction between (European) *medicinas* and (native) *mezinhas* we see that the diminutive form of the word is used to refer to Brazilian medicine (*mezinhas*), placing the medicinal value of native plants in a hierarchy based on the perceived geographic and religious superiority of Europe to the Americas. Just as missionaries reasoned that European plants were naturally superior, they also presumed European superiority in their medical encounters with native healers. In doing so, missionaries used their perceived geographic and religious authority to subjugate indigenous medicine people as objects of study and deny them the agency to possess this knowledge.

At the same time that they represented native medicine people as objects of study and lacking knowledge themselves, missionaries also sought out medicinal information in Brazil as part of an effort to transform American nature into Jesuit profit. Not only did missionaries use local medical knowledge for their benefit in colonial settlements, but they also began to circulate plant products on larger transoceanic markets, which they used to support the Company's "spiritual conquest" throughout the globe. In his essay "Acquisition and Circulation of Medical Knowledge within the Early Modern Portuguese Colonial Empire," Timothy Walker highlights that,

In the Portuguese colonies, medical practitioners encountered a radically different sphere of healing knowledge, one that they would explore,

exploit, expropriate, and export for more than three and a half centuries. In an unmatched feat of scientific acquisition and dissemination, Portuguese colonial officials spread indigenous drugs and information about various native healing methods to European territories on four continents. (247)

Walker argues that, despite the fact that Catholic missionaries were inclined to devalue indigenous medicine due to what they perceived to be the superiority of European medicines (i.e. the distinction between *medicinas* and *mezinhas*), missionaries depended on indigenous informants to reveal the healing properties embedded within Brazilian plant life.

Walker goes on to point out that, “The same intellectual proclivities that led missionaries to study indigenous languages and customs (equally strategic knowledge for winning conversions) led them to gather detailed information about native healing arts, remedies, and their ingredients” (249). We see the centrality of native medicine in Cardim’s treatise, for example, as he describes a variety of Brazilian herbs with medicinal properties, noting that, “[e] de tudo há grande abundância, ainda que não têm estas ervas a prefeitura das de Espanha...” [and of everything there is great abundance, even though these herbs do not have the perfection of those from Spain...] (126-27). Cardim praises Brazilian abundance while evaluating *materia medica* according to a geographic hierarchy (“these herbs do not have the perfection of those from Spain”). In this context, Cardim also positions Brazilian natural resources as lesser from a religious perspective.

Well into the sixteenth century, Cardim maintains a strong belief in the truth of ancient/Edenic medicine, which religious zealots of the time esteemed because of its God-given virtue. As missionaries encountered an unfamiliar abundance of American pharmacopeia, they used the Edenic gardens of the ancients as a significant point of comparison.¹¹⁰ For example, Cardim describes a resinous tree from Brazil, the *cabureigba*, as “muito estimada, e grande, por causa do bálsamo que tem” [very esteemed and great, because of the balm that it has] (100). As with many natural resources, the indigenous groups of Brazil had several uses for the *cabureigba*: “[s]erve muito para feridas frescas, e tira todo o sinal, cheira muito bem, e dele, e das cascas do pão se fazem rosários e outras coisas de cheiro” [It often serves fresh wounds, and takes away all scars, it smells very good, and from it, the bark of the wood is turned into rosaries and other fragrances] (100).

Although Cardim clearly reveals dependence on and positively evaluates indigenous natural/medicinal knowledge—“é muito estimada”—he also draws comparisons to familiar European and biblical categories when he refers to the resin produced by the tree as “bálsamo por se parecer muito com o verdadeiro das vinhas de

¹¹⁰ In his book *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600-1860*, Richard Grove argues that Europeans depend on Edenic allegories to describe American landscapes for lack of a better frame of reference. He positions that, “The older metaphor of an actualized Eden could thus be blended with the image of the island as a new empirical realm of safety amidst an unknown and explorable natural world whose chief characteristic was a lack of connection with all things European” (45). As it is applied to Brazil, in her work on *The Devil and the Land of the Cross: Witchcraft, Slavery, and Popular Religion in Colonial Brazil*, Laura de Mello y Souza specifies that, “An edenic nature, a demonized humanity, and a colony viewed as purgatory were the mental configurations with which the Old World cloaked Brazil during the first three centuries of its existence” (44).

Engaddi” [balsam, since it is quite similar to the real balsam of the vineyards of Engaddi] (100). This well-known vineyard of the Hebrew tradition is described in the Old Testament; however, the once great producer of balsam can only be found in the sacred scriptures of Western Christianity.¹¹¹ As he asserts that the “true balsam” can only be found in the vineyards of Engaddi, Cardim places American products in a religious hierarchy that favors Christian sacred botany.¹¹² As we see here, religion and medicine were inextricably linked in early modern scientific discourse.

Despite the inferiority that Cardim ascribes to Brazilian plants, his treatise describes forests full of foodstuffs (edible plants, fruit trees, vegetables, herbs) and provides a detailed account of *mezinhas* in the region. Of the twenty-six trees identified by Cardim, ten are classified as medicinal, and the fruits of at least ten others are also determined to have curative properties. Cardim extols the benefits of the *acaju* [cashew] as the “único remédio para chagas velhas e saram depressa” [only remedy for old sores, and they cure quickly] (94). He even goes on to say that: “A castanha é tão boa, e melhor que as de Portugal” [The cashew is as good, and better than those of Portugal] (94).

Additionally, Cardim identifies (almost exclusively in Tupi) fourteen different herbs with

¹¹¹ See Azevedo, *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil*, 100n92. This reference is from the bible verse Song of Solomon, I, 13 (see López-Morillas (trans.), *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, 220n2). Spanish Jesuit José de Acosta makes this same reference in his natural and moral history of the Indies (see chapter 3).

¹¹² Ana Maria de Azevedo points out the historical and religious significance of Engaddi in her edition of Cardim’s *Tratados*, pointing out that this reference made by Cardim is representative of his knowledge of sacred scripture and social position as an ecclesiastic. See footnote 93, page 100. According to The Catholic Encyclopedia, Pliny (Nat. Hist., V, xxvii, 73) places great value on the vineyard for its ability to cultivate the palm tree, second only to Jerusalem. For further contextualization of Engaddi within Catholic doctrine, see *The Catholic Encyclopedia: An International Work of Reference on the Constitution, Doctrine, Discipline, and History of the Catholic Church, Volume 5*, (428).

medicinal properties: *tetigcucú*, *igpecacóaya* [ipecacuanha], *cayapiá*, *tareroquig*, *goembegoaçu*, *caáobetinga*, *sobaúra*, *erva santa* (tobacco), *guaraquigyuha*, *camará*, *aipo*, *malvaisco*, *caraguatá*, and *timbó*.

For each *mezinha*, Cardim gives a detailed description of the plant in addition to how to administer it for its medicinal effects. For example, *Tetigcucú*, according to Cardim, is the same plant that Nicolás Monardes identifies as *mechoacão or mechoacán* from the Caribbean.¹¹³ The roots “serve de purga; toma-se esta raiz moída em vinho, ou água para febres, toma-se em conserva de açúcar como marmelada, coze-se com galinha, faz muita sede, mas é proveitosa, e obra grandemente” [serve as [a] purge; the root is drunk ground up in wine, or water for fevers, it is taken in a sugar preserve like marmalade, it is cooked with chicken, it makes you very thirsty, but this is beneficial, and works greatly] (*Tratados* 120). By the time that Cardim was charting local medicines in Brazil, European naturalists had already identified *mechoacán* as valuable medicine, as evinced in its inclusion in Monardes’ *Historia medicinal* (1565), the most exhaustive medicinal history based on New World plants of the era. While Cardim is thorough in his documentation of local pharmacopeia, he is careful to elide any reference to the indigenous source of this newfound abundance of botanical information.

Andres I. Prieto’s work on missionary scientists in South America highlights these silences to point out that “[t]here were genuine concerns on the part of the Jesuits regarding native medical traditions that led them to be suspicious of any kind of ethnobotanical information supplied by native informants” (*Missionary Scientists* 66). In

¹¹³ See Azevedo (trans.), *Tratados*, 120n156.

the Jesuit adoption of indigenous medical knowledge, Prieto identifies two sets of problems at play:

The first of these had to do with the close relationship between curative practices and native rituals and mythology, which were easily associated with demonic cults and practices by the Jesuits. The second was the lack in Indian medical practice of any recognizable etiological theory linking a disease to a particular treatment. Both of these types of problems cast a shadow of doubt and illegitimacy over indigenous medical lore and practices, which not only led the Jesuits to deny the Amerindians the possession of any medical knowledge, but also rendered the information provided by the natives problematic and, in some cases, downright dangerous. (66)

As we have seen in the case of Brazil, despite their possible demonic connections, local medicines were essential to the survival of Jesuit missions.

The solution, then, was to “Christianize” this knowledge by divorcing it from its ritual context via the administration of the plant-based medicine by spiritually responsible missionaries. As Prieto notes, “This detachment operating as it did both at a semantic and pragmatic level, allowed missionaries to reinscribe the local medicinal simples into Western clinical practices and theories” (67). Through this process, Jesuits were able to legitimize this knowledge and use it for their own purposes to garner the power and authority to heal among native communities. Cardim’s observations on the land and people of Brazil reveal that indigenous medical practitioners harbored an extensive store

of knowledge related to balms, febrifuges (medicines that reduce fever), and antidotes to poison derived from their natural environment. Prior to European contact, Amerindian health care systems were designed to target such maladies as stomach and intestinal problems, inflammation, skin diseases, gynecological disorders, parasites, and often involved the use of intoxicants by the healer to channel a spiritual connection in the pursuit of overall wellness for the patient in need of treatment, which, as we will see, proved polemical in missionary medical encounters with native healers.¹¹⁴ In his study of the climate and land of Brazil, Cardim references pre-contact populations along the coast of Brazil as in generally good health: “O Clima do Brasil geralmente é temperado de bons, delicados, e salutíferos ares, donde os homens vivem muito até noventa, cento e mais anos, e a terra é cheia de velhos” [The climate of Brazil, generally, is temperate of good, delicate, and healthy airs, where many men live to ninety, one hundred and more years, and the land is full of the elderly] (*Tratados* 63). Of course, after missionary intervention, the generally good health of native populations quickly deteriorated.

Prieto has also demonstrated how Jesuit confession networks served to extract botanical knowledge from native informants in Spanish South America (36-61). In the case of Jesuit confessions among the Mapuche, for example, Prieto argues,

The need for the priest to have access not only to the sins but also to the circumstances that contextualized the sinner’s behavior presented the Jesuits with an opportunity to learn about Mapuche medical and ritual practices. It is in this sense that we can view the practice of confession...

¹¹⁴ See Robert A. Voeks, *Sacred Leaves of Candomblé: African Magic, Medicine, and Religion in Brazil*, 39.

not just as a mechanism for social control, but also a communicative device used to elicit from the Indian penitents relevant information regarding the use of ethnobotanic lore in the shamanic healing rituals.

(56)

Prieto's findings in Spanish South America resonate with Jesuit missionary writings from colonial Brazil, indicative of the Order's systematic use of native confession as a tool to extract local healing knowledge throughout the Americas.

In a letter from São Vicente (1560), for example, Anchieta describes the confession of a new Christian "casado legitimamente" [legitimately married], who had been sick for some time and sought native treatment for his illness when Jesuit medicine proved fruitless (*Cartas, Informações, Fragmentos Historicos e Sermões* 146). Through this confession, Anchieta learns of the unsanctioned treatment performed by the non-Christian healer. Cardim observes this same technique in his treatise in which he reports that natives, "Usam de alguns feitiços, não porque creiam neles, nem os adorem, mas somente se dão a chupar em suas enfermidades, parecendo-lhes que receberão saúde, mas não por lhes parecer que há neles divindade, e mais o fazem por receber saúde que por outro algum respeito" [Make use of some spells, not because they believe in them, nor do they adore them, but only to let them suck out their sicknesses, seeming to them that they will regain health, but not because they seem to them that there is divinity in them, and moreover they do it to regain health rather than for some other respect] (166).¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ The sucking treatment performed by the native healer is a common technique used by indigenous practitioners throughout the Americas. In her work *The Land-Without-Evil*, Clastres discusses the sucking treatment based on Spanish Jesuit Antonio Ruiz de

As was true in many cases of terminal illness among natives, missionaries primarily worked to treat the soul through baptism (if necessary) and confession, given that physical remedies had little to no effect on the patient; this was related to the fact that the majority of sick natives were suffering from European-born diseases for which there was no cure. Anchieta reports that, in the case of a patient near Piratininga,

Fomos visita-lo ao lugar cinco milhas de Piratininga; consolou-se muito, confessou-se com muita dôr e contrição, e voltamos para casa: chegou um benzedor do sertão: o enfermo, assim por leviandade do coração, como pelo desejo da saúde, se deixou esfregar por aquele, e chupar segundo o rito dos Gentios; mas como não sentisse sinal de saúde que esperava, arrependido com grande dôr, uniu-se a nós outros a confessar o seu pecado, e estando junto da igreja, onde com frequentes confissões pôde limpar a sua alma dos pecados, curâmo-lo, e, daí a alguns dias, achando-se

Montoya's observations in his *La conquista espiritual*; with regard to "the art of sucking," she writes that, "They were thus healers per se; the author ... explains how the cure took place, starting with dances in the house of the sick person—a round of 'ridiculous gestations' says Montoya. Then the shaman sucked the ailing organ in order to extract the pathogenic object, 'needle, bone fragment or worm that he kept hidden under his tongue,' and show it to the onlookers. It was, as can be seen, the most common curing technique in all South America" (28). Wisecup (*Medical Encounters*) notes that this practice was present in Amerindian healing rituals throughout the hemisphere; she specifically cites the case of the Carolina Algonquians, and finds that, "In such ceremonies, medical practitioners localized and then extracted the offending object by employing a purgative or by sucking the object out of the body, sometimes using a hollow object such as a bone to form a suction over the afflicted part. The use of sucking treatments suggests that the Carolina Algonquians conceptualized disease as a discrete foreign entity, similar to invisible bullets, that had to be extracted from the body" (52-3).

melhor, se tornou para sua casa, onde caiu em uma doença incurável, pela qual se fez trazer a Piratininga, para aí acabar de expirar. (146-7)

We went to visit him at the place five miles from Piratininga; he was very consoled, he was confessed with much pain and contrition, and we headed back home: a healer from the *sertão* arrived: the sick one, due to the levity of [his] heart, as well as because of [his] desire for health, let himself be rubbed by that one, and sucked according to the ritual of the Gentiles; but, as he did not feel the sign of health that he had hoped, repentant with great pain, he came to the rest of us to confess his sin, and being next to the Church, where, with frequent confessions, his soul could be cleansed of his sins, we cured him, and, a few days later, he found himself better, he turned back toward his house, where he fell sick with an incurable illness, because of which he was made to be brought to Piratininga, in order to end up expiring there.

In this case, the native that the Jesuits treated was already baptized a Christian; seeing that there was little that could be done in terms of physical remedy, and given that he had been sick for so long, the missionaries focused on confession as a cure for his soul instead. For Anchieta, “with frequent confessions, his soul could be cleansed of his sins,” which allowed the missionaries to cure him, but only in the spiritual sense, as his physical body would expire soon thereafter.

As Alida Metcalf points out in the context of demographic devastation among indigenous communities, “By counting the number of souls saved rather than the number

of living converts in their missions, Jesuits believed that they were filling their charge, even though their villages had fewer and fewer Christian Indians in them” (*Go-betweens and the Colonization of Brazil* 151). In the case of the sick native outside of Piratininga, we find that the native sucking treatment did not heal the patient, who—fearing divine retribution for seeking non-Christian medical attention—returned to the Jesuit missionaries to confess his sin. Through this case study, we find that Prieto’s observation that indigenous confessions served as sources for information regarding native healing traditions rings true for Jesuit intervention in Brazil as well. Though missionaries condemned native healers as agents of the devil in the Americas, they systematically studied native healing practices—often times “with frequent confessions,” as Anchieta notes—as part of their efforts to extract local medicines.

Moreover, the role that confession played in colonial medical encounters is complex. On the one hand, missionaries often relied on confession as an instrument in the investigation of indigenous medical knowledge. On the other hand, Jesuits also understood confession as a type of (spiritual) medicine in its own right, as Jesuits were much more preoccupied with saving the native soul rather than treating their earthly ailments. Cristina Pompa’s study of Jesuit missionaries in colonial Brazil points to the ability of confession to heal the soul of any spiritual deformities; in this sense, she identifies confession as a spiritual remedy that the Jesuits preferred over inquisitorial interventions because it focused more on healing rather than the punishment:

Nas instruções jesuíticas para os confessores não encontramos o modelo do juiz (o inquisidor), mas o do médico, que procura e cura as feridas da

alma. Esta dimensão médica volta também, simbolicamente e praticamente, na catequese indígena, quando os jesuítas, substituindo-se aos xamãs, se propõem como “médicos” dos índios. (*Religião como tradução* 67)

In the Jesuit instructions for the confessors we do not find the model of the judge (the inquisitor), but that of the medic, that looks for and cures the wounds of the soul. This medical dimension also returns, symbolically and practically, in the indigenous catechism, when the Jesuits, substituting the shamans, make themselves out as the “medics” of the Indians.

Unlike Prieto, who defines the relationship between confessor and penitent in a judiciary sense (among others), Pompa limits the role of confessor to medic of the soul.

In my own readings of Jesuit confessions, I find significant evidence to support the notion of a hierarchical interaction between confessor and penitent, like that of judge and accused. Certainly, as Pompa affirms, confession had the capacity to function as spiritual medicine. However, we can also find other roles in the confessor/penitent interface, such as the connection between “informant and researcher” that Prieto has identified (56). It is through this intellectual engagement that confession served missionaries as a tool to extract and appropriate indigenous medicinal knowledge, which the Company used to economically support their global enterprise. Prieto does remind us, however, that Jesuits did not adopt native medicinal knowledge without reservation, given that, “[b]oth the sheer number of medicinal plants and traditional remedies described by the Jesuits and their sheer efforts to elicit this information from their charges

suggest that missionaries' attitude toward indigenous knowledge in general and the problematic status of native medical lore in particular was more nuanced" (61).

In order to understand the spiritual politics of ritual plant use that Cardim alludes to, we can look to the case of the "Paraguayan herb" that fellow Jesuit Antonio Ruiz de Montoya describes in his *La Conquista Espiritual* [*The Spiritual Conquest*] (1639).

Montoya refers to indigenous use of *yerba-maté* at the Jesuit mission of Guairá:

[c]on todo cuidado he buscado su origen entre indios de 80 y 100 años, y he sacado por cosa averiguada, que en tiempos que estos viejos eran mozos no se bebía ni aún se conocía sino de un gran hechicero o mago que tenía trato con el demonio, el cual se la mostró y dijo, que cuando quisiese consultarle, bebiese aquella yerba, y así lo hizo, y de su enseñanza otros que en nuestros días hemos conocido, y comúnmente los hechizos que hacen llevan desta yerba. (66)

I carefully inquired about its origins from Indians who were eighty to a hundred years old. I learned as a certain fact that in their youth the herb was not drunk or even known except a great sorcerer or magician who trafficked with the devil. The devil showed him the herb and told him to drink it whenever he wanted to consult him. He did so, and under his tutelage, so did others whom we have known in our own days. The witchcraft they performed commonly derives from this herb. (43)

Montoya's exposition of the Paraguayan herb provides some insight into the way in which plants serve as a spiritual gateway to otherworldly knowledge within native

cosmological frames. Although Montoya qualifies the herb as a demonic tool, we can look past his demonizing rhetoric to see that the plant was central to native spiritual traditions, representing a means by which they communed with their gods and healed their people.¹¹⁶

Moreover, the herb continued to be a central commodity in the colonial period, which the missionaries learned “from Indians who were eighty to a hundred years old.” Montoya likens to the “Chinese herb called cha,” or tea, which serves as a “remedy against all ills” (43). The missionary is skeptical of the herb, however, as he observes that,

Yo no dudo que tenga virtud (aunque nunca la he probado), pero el abuso en usarla es condenable, en su trabajoso beneficio, en la estimación y aprecio, en los efectos de sustentar con aliento al que trabaja, en el subido precio en que se vende (porque en el Paraguay vale un quintal, que son 100 libras, 25 pesos huecos; en Santa Fe vale 16 y 20 en reales de plata, en Tucumán 35 y 40 pesos, y a este peso va subiendo mientras más se va llegando a Potosí) y en el uso supersticioso de hechicería y aún en el olor

¹¹⁶ Often times, Amerindians consume these “demonic” herbs as a concoction that induces hallucinogenic effects, usually mixed with tobacco, usually in the interest of healing. Johannes Wilbert finds that, “Healing of the sick is an essential function of shamans anywhere. To carry out their office, South American tobacco shamans ingest diverse tobacco preparations [which might include coca or yerba-maté as Montoya indicates in his text] to contact the omniscient spirit world or they apply them topically to the body of the patient. In the former case, the tobacco shaman enters into a trance, in the course of which the soul leaves his body to consult with spirits and ancestral shamans concerning the cause and cure of his patient” (*Tobacco and Shamanism* 184).

y sabor que es zumaque, es muy semejante a la yerba del Pirú que llaman coca. (67)

I do not doubt its effectiveness, although I have never tried it. However, it deserves condemnation because of the abuse made of it, the hardship involved in its cultivation, the high esteem it enjoys, its sustaining and stimulating effects on workers, the high prices it commands (in Paraguay a quintal or hundredweight goes for twenty-five pesos, at Santa Fe for sixteen to twenty silver reals, and at Tucumán for thirty-five pesos, the price continuing to rise proportionately as one approaches Potosí), its superstitious employment in sorcery, and even for its odor and taste (that of sumac), in which it closely resembles the Peruvian herb called *coca*.

(43)

As we see here, Montoya's evaluations of these herbs in their "superstitious employment in sorcery" are further complicated by their adaptation in new cross-cultural colonial contexts. In his skepticism of the diabolical roots of the Paraguayan herb, he does not deny its effectiveness as a medical remedy (though he never tried it himself), but he condemns its abuse by colonial consumers that value the herb based on its "stimulating effects." The missionary goes on to note that the Paraguayan herb is similar to Peruvian *coca*, which is another popular American stimulant with medicinal properties that—from his vantage point—also has dubious ritualistic ties to native religious traditions.

Cardim's treatise on Brazil points to another polemical plant in missionary encounters with non-Christian healers and spiritual leaders in the Americas: tobacco.

Cardim includes tobacco in his list of medicinal herbs and even classifies as *erva santa* [saintly herb], despite knowing of its centrality to pre-contact indigenous ritual. In Tupi culture, tobacco had several different designations: *petigma*, *petume*, *atpy*, *petym*, *betum*, or *petum*.¹¹⁷ Cardim extols the medicinal value of the plant and says that: “Esta erva santa serve muito para várias enfermidades, como feridas, catarros, e, principalmente serve para doentes da cabeça, estômago, e asmáticos” [this saintly herb serves well for various sicknesses, such as wounds, colds, and primarily for those suffering from headaches, stomachaches, and asthmatics] (123). Furthermore, Cardim’s classification of the herb as “saintly” indicates that Europeans recognize the ritual power that tobacco Amerindian healers and spiritual leaders that used the plant.

Perhaps even more noteworthy in this case is the linguistic difference that Cardim applied to tobacco over other medicinal herbs: *erva santa* is the only herb in Cardim’s long list that he identifies in Portuguese and not Tupi, a clue that the plant was not relegated to native consumption alone. In addition to the curative properties of the plant, Cardim also describes the custom that the natives had to consume tobacco: “e bebem muito fumo; é uma das delícias, e mimos desta terra, e são todos os naturais, e ainda os Portugueses perdidos por ela” [and they drink a lot of smoke; it is one of the delights, and foolish things of this land, and all of the natives as well as the Portuguese are lost because of it] (Cardim 123-24). As we see in the case of yerba-maté, coca, and tobacco, some colonial consumption of native stimulants not only poses a problem because of their

¹¹⁷ See Azevedo (trans.), *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil*, (175n302).

ability to bestow “demonic” power to sacred rituals but also because they serve as another vice that intoxicates both natives and the Portuguese.

With regard to the consumption of early modern stimulants, Marcy Norton has offered a revisionist history of the cross-cultural appropriation of tobacco (and chocolate) consumption in the early modern Atlantic world. In her work *Sacred Gifts, Profane Pleasures*, she demonstrates that,

[t]he European (and African and mestizo and creole) embrace of tobacco and chocolate was not the consequence of addictive properties or purposeful efforts to make them fit aesthetic or ideological norms. Rather, the material forms of tobacco and chocolate first consumed by Europeans closely resembled Indian concoctions. Likewise, Europeans did not welcome tobacco and chocolate in spite of the meanings that Indians attributed to them, but often *because* of them. New tastes emerged out of the social matrix created of Atlantic Empires. (9)

Cardim’s classification of tobacco as *erva santa* is further evidence that supports Norton’s claim that native values influenced European plant consumption. As Cardim extols tobacco’s medicinal value (learned from natives), he condemns the Portuguese who get intoxicated by it, though not as idolaters and heretics but rather as undisciplined Christians, victims of their own vices.

While Cardim’s description of tobacco in this instance focuses on the colonial consumption of tobacco for leisure, the use of the plant in anti-missionary *santidade* movements recalls important cultural connections with Tupi and Tapuia sacred ritual use.

In this context, Christian theologians approached intoxicating plants with caution, though it seems as though tobacco consumption in and of itself was not necessarily indicative of good Christians versus bad “Indians.” Put in the wrong hands, however, and coupled with demonic intent, tobacco might be used as a dangerous vehicle, which allowed anti-Christians to commune with the Devil, as was true in the *Santidade de Jaguaripe*, a major anti-colonial religious movement operating outside of Bahia from 1580-1585. As we have seen in the *Santidade*, tobacco consumption played an important role in anti-Christian baptism rituals, which worked to strip new members of their Christian ties and induct them into the *Santidade*. The *Santidade de Jaguaripe*, one of the largest anti-colonial movements during the initial phases of contact, is demonstrative of the multidirectional ritual exchange that emerged in colonial Brazil, resulting from a transcultural milieu of healers and spiritual leaders that operated in the region.¹¹⁸

In his study of the *Santidade de Jaguaripe*, Vainfas highlights the religious undertones of the plant, as he describes the use of tobacco in a purification rite that mimicked Christian baptism rituals.¹¹⁹ In Vainfas’ analysis he points out that, in the wake of Christian baptisms *in extremis*, the *Santidade* leader worked to undo what many perceived to be the curse of death caused by Jesuit baptisms. In order to combat these

¹¹⁸ Also see chapter 1 for a preliminary discussion of the history of the *Santidade de Jaguaripe* (1580-85).

¹¹⁹ See Vainfas, “From Indian Millenarianism to a Tropical Witches’ Sabbath.” In this article, Vainfas makes the observation that “Joining the sanctity involved a ritual that resembled baptism in which, instead of water, adepts used *petim* smoke and were given new names; these names could be Amerindian or even Catholic saint’s names. Paradoxical as this may seem, it is, however, unsurprising that the Sanctity inverted the Catholic baptism or even aimed at eliminating it through a ‘purification’ rite” (222).

forms of malevolent Jesuit magic in the *sertões* of Brazil, the *Santidade* began stripping converts of their Christian ties via their appropriation of the baptism rite that initiated them in the first place, substituting sacred tobacco smoke for holy water. As we see here, tobacco consumption in the *Santidade* continued as a central component for anti-colonial rituals. For the Jesuits, this use of tobacco most certainly represented a “perversion” of Christian baptism, an example of the multidirectional processes of ritual exchange; in this case, we see an amalgam of Christian and Tupi magico-religious practices that the *Santidade* enacted via ritual tobacco use as a symbol of power in their rebellion against the colonial regime.

While tobacco, yerba-maté, and coca consumption proved to be polemical in sixteenth-century colonial settlements, the use of other native medicines did not pose the same set of religious complications. We see this, for example, as Cardim lists possible antidotes to “cobras que têm peçonha” [cobras that have poison]. In this section, Cardim is primarily concerned with different methods (both European and native) to treat snakebites, a very real threat for missionaries throughout the Americas. According to Cardim, “Parece que este clima flui peçonha, assim pelas infinitas cobras que há, como pelos muitos Alacrás, aranhas, e outros animais imundos, e as lagartixas são tantas que cobrem as paredes das casas, e agulheiros delas” [It seems that this climate pours poison, due to the infinite cobras that there are, as well as because of the many Scorpions, spiders, and other filthy animals, and there are so many lizards that they cover the walls of the houses, and their holes] (84). Specifically in relation to the poisonous cobras, Cardim warns of the great pain that these serpents cause and explains that people die

daily due to deadly bites: “[e] são espantosas, que como uma pessoa é mordida logo pede a confissão, e faz conta que morre, e assi dispõe de suas cousas” [and they are scary, such that a person that is bitten asks for confession after, and realizes that they will die, and puts their things in order] (83). Cardim provides a list of possible cures that must be applied in twenty-four hours or less in order for the victim to have a chance at survival: “sangrando-se, bebendo unicórnio, ou carimá, ou água do pau de cobra, ou qualquer outro remédio” [bleeding themselves, drinking unicorn, or *carimá*, or water from the cobra’s stick, or any other remedy] (83). Symbolic of the transcultural nature of medicine in missionary settlements, the colonial first-aid kit that Cardim presents to his reader is filled with both European and indigenous antidotes to poison.¹²⁰

Drawing from the European tradition, Cardim suggests bloodletting or the consumption of the powder of a unicorn horn as possible remedies. The unicorn, for example, had been considered *materia medica* since the time of the ancients, a belief that was perpetuated by early modern naturalists. The traditional use of ground unicorn horn as an antidote to poison has a long social history within the context of politically motivated assassinations through poison in medieval courtly culture in Europe.¹²¹ In this sense, the traditional understanding of the unicorn as *materia medica* takes on a new

¹²⁰ Daston and Park explain that “Europe’s conquest of America enriched its vocabulary of wonders, though the syntax of discourse retained its medieval structure for some time. Well into the sixteenth-century, topographical marvels and the exotic products of both the East and West kept their princely associations and the aura of romance; they continued to represent wealth, nobility, and colonialism—this last increasingly a matter not of aspiration but of fact. Collectors supplemented their rhinoceros teeth and unicorn horns with the carapaces of armadillos; the European luxury market expanded to include just gems and spices, but new commodities such as tobacco and short-lived slaves of unfamiliar physiognomy and hue” (*Wonders and the Order of Nature* 108).

¹²¹ See Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, 74-5.

meaning as Cardim projects it onto America. The fear of poison shifts from European courtly culture to that of the New World, where the threat is no longer limited to political enemies vying for power among the royal nobility, but accounts for the danger that venomous life forms posed in the tropics. As Cardim's narrative reinforces, European-based remedies were not always readily available in colonial settlements, and, if the poison-stricken patient did not have access to a trained surgeon—one who would know the right place to cut under the right astral alignment—or to ground-up unicorn horn, Cardim recommends that they turn to indigenous remedies: for example, *carimá* or water from a cobra's stick. From a biomedical standpoint, *carimá* probably would have been the best option, given that it is a dry, fine flour ground from the cassava plant, which is known to have anti-venom properties.

Whether a plant was seen as a simple medicine or a more complex conduit for devilish intervention, missionaries like Cardim paid careful attention to American botany and its diverse use in native traditions. As we have seen, Jesuits gained access to ritual spaces in which this information was encoded via their missionary confession networks, an invaluable tool in the extraction of local pharmacopeia. In the following section, I turn from how knowledge was extracted to how it was imposed, analyzing how Cardim used European theories of physical and moral degeneration in the tropics to justify Jesuit “spiritual conquest” in the region. Cardim's projection of Old World myths onto Amerindian landscapes reminds us that not only did European settlers extract life forms, both physically and discursively, from autochthonous communities, but they also superimposed their own beliefs onto indigenous sacred and material landscapes in Brazil.

The Geopolitics of Spiritual Conquest: Denigrating Brazil

Cardim's narrative is symptomatic of the ideological processes that underwrite the projection of Old World beliefs as a way to malign or denigrate New World people. Specifically, Cardim discredits native religious practices in order to legitimize intensive Christian indoctrination in the region as well as the settlement of native populations into Jesuit missions. The philosophical jurisprudence that underlies Iberian claims to land in the Americas is built on the foundation that natives were morally corrupt and therefore naturally fit to be subjugated to Europeans.¹²² European cosmology embraced a social hierarchy determined by geographic difference, which was ultimately supported by early modern climate theory (the theory of the five zones).¹²³ In this view, because of the sinful

¹²² On the theory of natural slavery as it applies to "just" war in the context of sixteenth-century debates on the Americas, see Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*, 27-56.

¹²³ On the theory of five zones, Wey Gómez's (*The Tropics of Empire*) finds that, "Whether one considers Greco-Latin sources like Pliny and Ptolemy or scholastic authors like Albertus and d'Ailly, this geopolitical model was unmistakably tied to the theory of the five zones, the most fundamental cosmological paradigm available to Western geography since its formulation by the Eleatic philosopher Parmenides (5th century BCE)" (71-2). According to Wey Gómez, this is the theory that informs sixteenth-century Spanish colonization, which can be extended to the Iberian empires more broadly. In this theory, the degenerate nature of the Americas corrupted its inhabitants thereby serving as the justification for European colonization in the hemisphere (92-106). In sum, Wey Gómez shows that, "the theory of celestial influence lent at least nominal coherence to the knowledge system that connected geography and politics in the high scholastic tradition. In the cosmology inherited from the Greeks and Arabs, celestial bodies governed a chain of causation that, through the four elements and their compounds, affected the humors in the human body and influenced behavior. Celestial bodies predisposed—though they did not compel—humans to act in accordance with their natures. Knowledge of place beneath the heavens thus revealed the causes not only for the motion and change of all physical bodies but also for the complex conduct of rational creatures. To the extent that humans—as individuals and collectivities—might yield to the nature induced in them by the heavens, their behavior was a function of place" (92).

nature of tropical climates, Europeans were morally responsible for the “civilization” of “barbarous” Indians, whose constitutions could not withstand the Devil’s temptations throughout the region without proper Christian guidance.

In his treatise, Cardim denigrates native populations in Brazil due to their lack of knowledge of Christian creation myths. Cardim writes that, “Este gentio parece que não tem conhecimento do princípio do Mundo, do dilúvio parece que tem alguma notícia, mas como não tem escrituras, nem caracteres, a tal notícia é escura e confusa...” [these people seem to lack knowledge of the beginning of the World, of the flood it seems that they have some news, but since they do not have writings, nor characters, such news is clouded and confused] (165). He goes on to claim that, “Este gentio não tem conhecimento algum de seu Criador, nem de cousa do Céu... portanto não tem adoração nenhuma nem cerimónias, ou culto divino” [These people do not have any knowledge of their Creator, nor of anything from heaven... therefore they do not have any worship nor ceremonies, or divine cult] (165-166). Despite Cardim’s claims that “these people do not have any knowledge of their Creator, nor of anything from heaven,” his text confirms that the natives of Brazil did, in fact, have a *religious* relationship with nature. We see this clearly, for example, in Cardim’s identification of *Tupã* as the thunder god and *Curupira* as the forest spirit. Beyond *Tupã* and *Curupira*, Jesuits also recognized the widespread belief in *Sumé*, the original *pajé*.¹²⁴

Hélène Clastres’ foundational study on *The Land-Without-Evil: Tupi-Guaraní Prophetism* puts into question the way in which European travel writers claimed that the

¹²⁴ Cardim does mention other supernatural beings outside of this binary, which he identifies as the “devils” Taguaigba, Macachera, and Anhangá (*Tratados* 166).

Tupi were “peoples without superstition,” meaning that they did not have a structured religion according to the parameters set forth by Western theology. Clastres takes previous scholars to task on this issue, who construct their analyses based on this early modern assessment of native communities as devoid of religious traditions. Clastres criticizes this Eurocentric view of religion as it is applied to Tupi-Guaraní cultures,¹²⁵ which has problematic implications for the study of indigenous culture. In support of a more critical reading of these archival sources, Clastres argues that, “After all we are not forced to accept blindly the assertions of the old chroniclers and to give to their opinion the same credit we give to their information. When reading them, we will see that they unknowingly delivered to us the essence of the Indian religion” (6).

Despite this evaluation of native Brazilians as a godless people, Cardim concedes that, “[s]abem que têm alma e que esta não morre e depois da morte vão a uns campos onde há muitas figueiras ao longo de um formoso rio, e todas juntas não fazem outra cousa senão bailar e têm grande medo do demónio, ao qual chamam Curupira” [they do know that they have a soul and that this does not die and after death they go to some fields where there are many tall fig trees from a beautiful river, and all together they do not do anything but dance and they have great fear of the demon, which they call Curupira] (165-66). Cardim also writes that, “Não têm nome próprio com que expliquem a Deus, mas dizem que *Tupã* é o que faz os trovões e relâmpagos, e que este é o que lhes deu as enxadas, e mantimentos, e por não terem outro nome mais próprio natural, chamam Deus *Tupã*” [They do not have a name itself with which they explain God, but

¹²⁵ See Clastres, *The Land-Without-Evil*, 7-24.

they say that *Tupã* is the one that makes thunder and lightening, and that this one is the one that gave them hoes, and foodstuffs, and because they do not have any other natural name of their own they call God *Tupã*] (167).

For Cardim, the existence of supernatural beings, such as *Tupã* and *Curupira*, represent a possible entry point for Christianization; Jesuits related the native fear of *Curupira* to the danger represented by the devil in Christian cosmology and their great reverence for *Tupã* to God. Missionaries reasoned that, if they could present God as a form of salvation against *Curupira* (i.e. the devil), it might win over souls to the Christian faith, because “[é] tanto o medo que lhe têm, que só de imaginarem nele morrem, como aconteceu já muitas vezes” [it is so much fear that they have of him, that, if the only think of him, they die, as has already happened many times] (166). In this passage, Cardim symbolically conflates Tupi religious beliefs with his own Christian imaginary. For native societies, the binary between good and evil that Cardim constructs around *Tupã* and *Curupira* certainly presents an incomplete picture of their polytheistic pantheon, which is further complicated through variations across diverse Brazilian nations.

In *A construção do Brasil*, Jorge Couto maps out a general schema that represents Tupi cosmology, which he understands to center on Monan, the creator of the sky, the earth, and humans, as well as Maíra, god of the universal science of natural phenomenon and ritual, along with other socio-spiritual beings. Couto’s research also finds that Tupi creation stories include a civilizing hero by the name of Sumé, who held a dominant position within the pantheon along with Monan and Maíra; in this cosmological structure, Sumé represents the primordial *pajé* or *caraíba* (109). Couto also points out that, “A

figura da herói, além de simbolizar o espírito da unidade étnica, constituía também um decisivo fator de coesão social, pois consolidava as relações humanas no seio da comunidade, bem como fortalecia o seu posicionamento face ao ecossistema, ao mundo animal, e aos outros grupos indígenas” [The figure of the hero, beyond symbolizing the spirit of ethnic unity, also constituted a decisive social cohesive factor, since it consolidated human relations in the breast of humanity of the community, as it strengthened its position with respect to the ecosystem, the animal world, and other indigenous groups] (110). Tupi cultures represented these civilizing heroes through the three main deities of Monan, Maíra, and Sumé.¹²⁶ Some Tupi myths go on to tell of Sumé’s two brothers: Tamendonare (good) and Aricoute (evil).¹²⁷

Following this line of inquiry, Barbara Ganson (*The Guaraní Under Spanish Rule*) expands on previous studies of the Tupi-Guaraní and describes their religious practices in the following light:

Tupí-Guaraní religion was animistic. These native peoples believed in nature and in the importance of the sun, moon, thunder, lightning, and

¹²⁶ See Couto, *A construção do Brasil*, 110.

¹²⁷ In his book *Myth and Meaning: Cracking the Code of Culture*, reminds us of the Tupinamba myth, also shared among Amerindians in Andean and Amazonian territories, in which these twins came to allegorize collective ideas about morality and ethics: “The best-known version, recorded by the French monk André Thevet in the sixteenth century, explained that the seduced woman gave birth to twins, one of them born from the legitimate husband, and the other from the seducer who is the Trickster. The woman was going to meet the god who would be her husband, and while on her way the Trickster intervenes and makes her believe that *he* is the god; so, she conceives from the Trickster. When she later finds the legitimate husband-to-be, she conceives from his also and later gives birth to twins. And since these false twins had different fathers, they have antithetical features: one is brave, the other a coward; one is the protector of the Indians, the other of the white people; one gives goods to the Indians while the other one, on the contrary, is responsible for a lot of unfortunate happenings” (27).

other natural forces. The Tupinambá in Brazil especially feared the anthropomorphic spirit of thunder, whom they envisioned to be a destructive figure. The Tupí-Guaraní identified their guardian spirits with good weather, abundant harvests, and the ability to wage warfare successfully against other indigenous groups. They also believed in a number of evil spirits who could cause them harm through sickness, death, defeat in warfare, and drought. Animalism, which anthropologists define as the concept of supernatural powers in animal form, was another feature of the Tupí-Guaraní religion. (20)

It was through this religious frame that Jesuit missionaries likened the Christian God to the Tupí-Guaraní belief in *Tupã*, the god of thunder, as a supernatural force to be reckoned with on earth. Despite their assertion that natives were without superstition—thus providing a blank slate on which to imprint Christianity—missionaries did recognize that some indigenous traditions resembled their own; they explained this via the widespread myth that Saint Thomas the apostle had spearheaded evangelization in the hemisphere, since his actual footprint was still visible to the naked eye.

Montoya provides an eyewitness account of the traces of Saint Thomas—identified with Sumé—in his *La conquista espiritual* [*The Spiritual Conquest*] (1639). Regarding Brazil, he writes that:

Fama constante es en todo Brasil entre los moradores portugueses y entre los naturales que habitan toda la Tierra Firme, que el santo Apóstol empezó a caminar por tierra dese la isla de Santos, sita al sur, en que hoy

se ven rastros que manifiestan este principio de camino a rastro, en las huellas que el santo Apóstol dejó impresas en una gran peña que está al fin de la playa, donde desembarcó en frente de la barra de San Vicente, que por testimonio público se ven el día de hoy, menos de un cuarto de legua del pueblo. Yo no las he visto; pero 200 leguas desta costa la tierra adentro, vimos mis compañeros y yo un camino que tiene ocho palmos de ancho, y en este espacio nace una muy menuda yerba, y a los dos lados deste camino crece hasta casi media vara, y aunque agostada la paja se quemien aquellos campos, siempre nace la yerba a este modo. Corre este camino por toda aquella tierra, y me han certificado algunos portugueses, que corre mi seguido desde el Brasil, y que comúnmente le llama el camino de Santo Tomé, y nosotros hemos tenido la misma relación de los indios de nuestra conquista espiritual. (115-16)

There is a firm tradition in Brazil, among both Portuguese settlers and indigenous inhabitants of the Main, that the holy apostle began his overland journey from the island of Santos, situated in the South, where to this day one can see traces which reveal the beginning of his journey or track: the footprints the holy apostle left on a great rock at the end of the beach where he landed across from the bar of São Vicente. It is officially attested that these traces can be seen to this day, less than a quarter of a league from town. I have not seen them myself; however, two hundred leagues inland from the coast my companions and I did see a path, about

eight spans wide, on which the grass grows very short although on either side of the path it grows nearly half a yard high. Even though these lands are burned over when the grass dries out, the grass always grows back the same way. This track runs through the entire country, and I have been assured by some Portuguese that it runs quite unbroken from Brazil and is commonly known as Saint Thomas Road. We have heard the same story from the Indians of our own spiritual conquest. (75-6)

To confirm this mystical phenomenon in the case of the Tupi-Guaraní regions in South America, missionaries often conflated Sumé (the primordial *pajé*) with the figure of Saint Thomas.¹²⁸ This trope is prevalent in missionary discourse throughout the Americas, which Jesuits often use to account for the resemblance between indigenous and Christian practices despite the “demonic” nature that Jesuits ascribe to indigenous “perversions” of St. Thomas’ teachings. Missionaries mapped these points of convergence as a central tenet of their evangelization strategy.

Once he establishes the spiritual deficiency of the Tupi, Cardim further denigrates Brazil based on its geography, as he observes that “os céus são muitos puros e claros, principalmente de noite, a lua é mui prejudicial à saúde, e corrompe muito as cousas...” [the skies are very pure and clear, mainly at night, the moon is very harmful to [one’s] health, and it really corrupts things] (63). Here, Cardim asserts that the moon in the Tropics can be detrimental to the body and to “things,” given its power to corrupt. We can start to unpack the significance of Cardim’s assertions within the framework of

¹²⁸ On the legend of Saint Thomas in this context, see Clastres, *The Land-Without-Evil*, 15-6)

humoral medicine inherited from the Hippocratic and Galenic theory of humors and constitutions. From this standpoint, the cold and wet properties of the moon were set in opposition to the hot and dry properties of the sun;¹²⁹ if the proper preventative steps were not taken, these influences had the ability to adversely affect humoral equilibriums, which could lead to sickness, disease, or emasculation.¹³⁰ More specifically, within the frame of humoral theory, the cold and wet properties of the moon implied that it stimulated phlegmatic qualities. In this example, we see that European healing arts of the late medieval and early modern periods took into account astral influences that linked the motion of the stars and planets to causal relations manifested on earth. In other words, in this worldview, the movement of the skies had a direct effect on weather and agriculture as well as on the human body that would impact modes of everyday existence.

¹²⁹ The theory is based on the assumption that the body is made up of four humors in conjunction with the four Aristotelian elements of earth, water, air, and fire: black bile (dry and cold); phlegm (wet and cold); blood (hot and wet); and, yellow bile (dry and hot). The early modern climate theory of moral degeneration not only endangered Amerindians but threatened European bodies as well. Andrew Wear explains the significance of the theory of humoral acclimatization for Europeans in tropical environments in his essay “Medicine in Early Modern Europe, 1500-1700”: “For Europeans the key to living abroad was climate and acclimatisation. Many illnesses in foreign parts, it was thought, were due to a change of air (or climate). The air into which a person was born naturally suited their humoral constitution. A foreign climate would often threaten the newly arrived settler, for their constitution, it was believed, could not cope with the climate. The solution was a period of ‘seasoning’, which would allow the body to adjust to the new environment (and when work was supposed to be limited and diet carefully monitored)” (*The Western Medical Tradition 800 BC to AD 1800*, 230).

¹³⁰ Kate Aughterson (*Renaissance Women: A Sourcebook: Constructions of Femininity in England*) points out that, on the Galenic humoral continuum, men are qualified as hot and dry while women lie closer to the moist and cold end of the spectrum. “The humors are descriptions of socialized characteristics, which were sexualized. In humoral theory sexual identity can thus exist on a continuum: there can be manly women and womanly men, because there can be dry cold women and hot moist men” (41-43).

In more general terms, Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra demonstrates that, “The science used by Spanish American intellectuals came wrapped in the ancient Mediterranean idioms of Hippocratic-Galenic physiology and astrology” (*Nature, Empire, and Nation* 67). For example, early modern medical procedures of bloodletting and purging in Europe were largely informed by and executed in accordance with the astral positions and influences. And, as Cañizares-Esguerra reminds us:

Astrology was considered a very serious science, which studied the processes through which planets and fixed stars controlled “generation and corruption” in the sublunar world by eliciting change among the four elements (water, earth, fire, and air) and therefore over human temperaments and constitutions, that is, over the bodily balance of elements and humors as described in the Hippocratic and Galenic corpus. Astrology was part of the obvious mental landscape of every learned individual in the early modern world, regardless of religion or country of origin. Although prognostication was itself a contentious issue that raised all sorts of theological and political questions, everybody took it for granted that the stars affected behavior in the sublunar world. (67)

Cardim’s treatise on Brazil provides further evidence that this view was shared and applied throughout Iberian empires. Cañizares-Esguerra’s observations lead us to the conclusion that early modern cultures throughout the Atlantic world connected cyclical movements of celestial bodies to human experiences, a logic that Europeans effectively used to racialize the human body according to geography. This philosophy provided the

ideological groundwork to justify the Jesuit appropriation of power and knowledge in the Americas, particularly in the field of medicine.

In his treatise, Cardim's goes a step further to diagnose the land of Brazil as melancholic: "[é] algum tanto melancólica" (63). Here, the use of the term melancholy stems from the Hippocratic-Galenic physiological theories that denigrated native bodies. Within this frame, melancholy is both a symbolic and physical medical condition, which Cardim ascribes to the landscape itself. Implicit in the observation of the melancholic nature of Brazil made by Cardim is a warning to the colonial settler to prepare to monitor their diet and exertion levels in order to maintain humoral equilibrium. In other words, Cardim's assumption of the melancholic state of the Brazilian landscape lends "scientific" justification for European intervention in American territories based on the climate theory of moral degeneration that incapacitates the Amerindian body to resist the Devil. In this worldview, the physical make-up of people, plants, and places was determined by their geographic position in relation to Europe. By highlighting the melancholic nature of Brazil, Cardim encodes a humoral theory of degeneration into the landscape itself, reflecting the scientific/medical theories of the time on the effects that tropical climates had on European constitutions and human bodies more generally. Moreover, the theory of acclimatization and its extension to the myth of degeneration remained accredited through the eighteenth century, which had lasting effects on the way

in which indigenous knowledge was valued, categorized, and appropriated by the European observer within the larger field of the history of science and medicine.¹³¹

Beyond his warning of moral degeneration for European readers, Cardim dedicates a section of his treatise on “Homens marinhos, e Monstros do mar” [Seamen and Sea Monsters] native to Brazil; he writes that, “Estes homens marinhos se chamam na língua Igpupiára, têm-lhes os naturais tão grande medo que só de cuidarem nele morrem muitos, e nenhum que o vê escapa; alguns morreram já, e perguntando-lhes a causa, diziam que tinha visto este monstro” [In the [Tupi] language, these seamen are called Igpupiára, the natives are so afraid of them that many die just from seeing after him, and no one that sees him escapes; some already died, and asking them the cause, they said that [they] had seen this monster] (141). Cardim’s documentation of the *Igpupiára* takes on another layer of meaning as he places a dense population of these sea monsters in Jaguaripe, the site of one of the strongholds of anticolonial resistance from 1580-1585 outside of Bahia.¹³²

According to Daston and Park, in the sixteenth century, monsters generally represented some sort of sign or portent, and there were three general categories: those with some sort of deformity; “those produced by the mother’s imagination (for example, hairy children); and those of ambiguous or unstable sexuality (*Wonders and the Order of*

¹³¹ See Cañizares-Esguerra, *Nature, Empire, and Nation*, for a detailed account of the Creole engagement with Galenic humor-theory models. Representatives of creole patriotism had to assuage the semantic implications of degenerative qualities inherent to the lands under tropical stars. Creoles had to distance themselves from accusations of “moral degeneration” based on place and isolated racial difference as the new qualifier for degeneration (85-95).

¹³² Cardim, *Tratados da Terra e Gente do Brasil*, (trans.) Azevedo, 141.

Nature 192). The authors go on to note a fourth kind of monster, hybrid monsters, under which category the *Igpupiára* would be located as half man, half monster:

Hybrid monsters seen as springing from the intercourse of humans and animals—though there was debate as to whether this was possible—had somewhat different status, as the behavior that gave rise to them was itself abhorrent. The resulting monster, even if not the product of special divine intervention, was nonetheless a sign of sin. (192)

In light of the philosophical implications of these different types of monsters, whether intentional or not, Cardim's placement of a substantial population of sea monsters in Jaguaripe inscribes the land within a religious discourse of transgression, given that these particular monsters were a sign of sin. Thus, Cardim not only demonizes the ritual leaders of resistance in the *Santidade de Jaguaripe* but he also symbolically codifies the space and place occupied by the group by inserting sea monsters in the Brazilian aquatic habitat; within his narrative, the sea monsters embody transgression and the moral degeneration produced by tropical climates.

Through his recognition of the Brazilian sea monster and his projection of sin onto the region of Jaguaripe, we see the way in which European writers positioned themselves with respect to the Americas; in general, sixteenth-century European travel writers find themselves caught between medieval cosmology and their new experiential notions of the early modern world. In her critical edition of Cardim's treatise, Azevedo points out that both Cardim and his fifteenth- and sixteenth-century contemporaries—Pero de Magalhães de Gândavo, Gabriel Soares de Sousa, Frei Vicente do Salvador,

among others—were informed by a type of fantasy anthropology, which they had inherited from Greco-Roman natural histories such as Pliny and Isidore of Seville's *Etimologias* (140n217). In his foundational work *The Fall of Natural Man: The American Indian and the Origins of Comparative Ethnology*, Anthony Pagden addresses the problem of recognition that faced the European observer turned naturalist and ethnographer. Pagden describes the Americas as a “[n]ew geographical space of both the familiar and the fantastic dimensions of the Atlantic world as it was known through the writings of commentators both ancient and modern” (11). As Pagden points out, “for many Europeans of the later middle ages a ‘set’, a cluster of images which were thought to constitute a real world of nature in the remoter areas of the world where, precisely because they were remote, the unusual and the fantastic were thought to be the norm” (10).

In the case of Cardim, then, when faced with the strange and the unknown in Brazil, he reverts to fantasy narratives derived from Old World cosmology to explain the inexplicable.¹³³ In Laura de Mello e Souza's work *The Devil and the Land of the Holy Cross: Witchcraft, Slavery, and Popular Religion in Brazil*, she begins her study with an analysis of the way in which the Christian West projected medieval tales of fantastic voyages onto the Americas (3-44). In this process, Mello e Souza traces the transference

¹³³ Following this line of logic then, as we lift the Edenic veil ‘cloaking’ the history of the *engenho* in Brazil, Campbell points out that: “The longing for another world seems to have been a *real* pleasure on the construction of the Edenic narrative of America. Though “Eden” came to obscure terrible exploitations of people, nations, land, and resources, and came to it soon, that does not give us leave, as curious historians of culture, to dismiss the element of true desire in the false consciousness of colonial empire” (*Wonder and Science* 2).

of Western exoticism based in the Indian Ocean to Brazil in the colonial period. She notes that,

Once discovered, Brazil was to occupy a position in the European imagination analogous to that previously held by the far-off mysterious lands that, once known and penetrated, had lost their enchantment. With the advent of slavery, this imagination would be remodeled and restructured while still maintaining deep European roots. As a modified expression of the European imagination, Brazil also became an extension of the metropolis with the advance of the colonizing process. Everything that existed there existed here, but in a singular colonial form. (9)

In the case of Cardim's observations in Brazil, the age-old myth of the medieval monster takes on the singular colonial form of *Igpupiára*, a significant figure within native cosmology. Cardim's Brazilian sea monsters represent the critical points at which notions of the marvelous, the singular, and the curious associated with classical Greco-Roman cosmography were transposed onto the American landscape, which reflect the "intimate links between cognitive and emotional response to such anomalies," as noted by Daston and Park (*Wonders and the Order of Nature* 209). At the same time, new information from the Americas was simultaneously refracted back upon the tradition of natural philosophy, which served as a catalyst to rework epistemological parameters within the discipline.

As this section demonstrates, on one hand, the critical eye that was cast upon the ancients is the result of firsthand observation and experience that contradicted previously

accepted models and prompted renovations in scientific methodology during the European Renaissance. On the other hand, European medieval cosmology continued on into early modern natural philosophy and was projected onto colonized topographies. In this process we are able to glimpse the cognitive mechanisms through which Europeans symbolically imagined these “new” lands. In addition to his moral evaluations of indigenous people in Brazil, Cardim provides an exhaustive list of animals, serpents, birds, fruit trees, medicinal trees, medicinal oils, trees that can be used for hydration, trees that are good for wood, edible plants, medicinal herbs, aromatic herbs, and varieties of marine life (including sea monsters and mermaids!). He also dedicates a section to transplanted animals, trees, and herbs from Portugal to Brazil (*Tratados* 157-61). Through the juxtaposition of these two narrative threads in Cardim’s work, it is possible to outline the way in which Christian evangelization worked in tandem with imperial colonialism to dominate and exploit Amerindian power and knowledge in the early modern Atlantic world. In the following section, I outline the value of Jesuit missionary writings within the larger Atlantic marketplace for manuscripts on the Americas.

The Commerce of Jesuit Writings in Early Modern Empires

Beyond the Jesuit missionary project and the imperial interests it served, the subjects of competing imperial powers also valued American ethnographic and botanical information, particularly as a result of their limited access due to Iberian protectionist

policies.¹³⁴ We see this, for example, in the pirating of Cardim's treatise by Purchas and its translation in *Hakluytus Posthumous* (1625). In this section, we take a closer look at the value of Cardim's manuscripts on the land and people of Brazil for a larger European audience in the market for American travel narratives.¹³⁵ At the turn of the seventeenth century, the history of Cardim's manuscript takes us to the printing house outside of St. Paul's Churchyard "at the signe of the rose" in London, where it was first disseminated in translation for an Anglican public by Samuel Purchas. Purchas included Cardim's work in *Hakluytus Posthumus or Purchas His Pilgrimes: Contayning a History of the World in Sea Voyages and Land Travells by Englishmen and others* (London 1625) under the title "A Treatise of Brazil, written by a Portugall which had long lived there."¹³⁶ In volume

¹³⁴ Portuondo's research demonstrates that, "The rationale behind the secrecy policy was very straightforward. If documents that revealed the geodesic coordinates, geographical features, coastal outlines, hydrography, and natural resources of the New World were produced and circulated publicly, these, in the hands of the enemies, could be used to reach the New World and inflict harm on the crown's patrimony and the peoples the state had the obligation to protect. Thus this type of knowledge was considered to have strategic, defensive, and monetary value and need to be safeguarded from foreign and internal enemies alike" (*Secret Science* 7).

¹³⁵ In his study on Carlos de Singüenza y Góngora (creole cosmographer of the Baroque in colonial Mexico), Bauer points to these imperial tensions within the larger Atlantic world, noting, "[t]hat Spain's mercantilist economy of knowledge had ultimately benefited not Spain or Spanish America, but rather her Protestant enemies, as English and Dutch Pirates were pouncing upon the valuable intelligence in the shipholds en route from the Americas to the Iberian peninsula" (*The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures* 169)

¹³⁶ L.E. Pennington notes that: "Purchas's publishing career lasted only from 1613 to 1626, a mere thirteen years, and it is not surprising that this works were seldom a source for other English writers during his lifetime. The first significant use of Purchas's works came in 1621 when Peter Heyleyn published the first edition of what would become his very popular *Microcosmus, or little description of the great world* in which he cited *Pilgrimage* more than twenty times for his descriptions of lands in Asia, Africa, and North America" ("Samuel Purchas: His reputation and the uses of his works" 5).

XVI of his encyclopedic work, Purchas sets Cardim's treatise alongside other travel narratives from inside the Iberian empire.

In the introduction to his seventh book on "Voyages to and about the Southerne America," Purchas promises to present the most exact treatise of Brazil to the best of his knowledge:

It was written (it seemeth) by a Portugall Frier (or Jesuite) which had lived there thirtie yeares in those parts, from whom (much against his will) the written Booke was taken by one Frances Cooke of Dartmouth in a Voyage outward bound for Brazil, An. 1601. Who sold the same to Master Hacket for twenty shillings; by whose procurement it was translated out of Portugall into English: which translation I have compared with the written original, and in many places supplied defects, amended errors, illustrated with notes, and thus finished and furnished for the publike to view. (417)

In his note to the reader, Purchas' commentary lends some insight regarding the use value of travel narratives like Cardim's on European book markets.¹³⁷ We know, for example, that Anglican cleric, Sir Richard Hakluyt, acquired the manuscript from Cooke for twenty

¹³⁷ Travel narratives from the Americas engage early modern readers through the discourse of wonder, which is intimately linked with dominant natural philosophies of the period. For a general overview of the role that curiosity, marvels, and wonder played within medieval and early modern scientific discourse, see Daston and Park, *Wonders and the Order of Nature*, where they argue that, with European imperial expansion, the discourse of the marvelous had been revived. They go on to note that, "[T]he language of wonder also served another purpose: to attract the attention of wealthy patrons and lay readers who might find little to engage them in volumes of more matter-of-fact prose. The rise of printing created a large and growing audience for literature of this sort... [T]exts on this topic quickly became a fixture in the broader market for large and lavishly printed books" (149).

shillings, roughly one pound at the time. Hakluyt, who was an avid collector of travel narratives, put many of his written acquisitions to use in his capstone work *Principal Navigations of the English Nation* (1589 and 1598-1600). He did not, however, include Cardim's *Tratados* in any of his collections, though the manuscript did make its way to Purchas, who eventually included the full translation in his 1625 edition of *Hakluytus Posthumous or Purchas His Pilgrimes*.

While the exchange-value of Cardim's manuscripts appears slight at first glance, a deeper look into the contents and early modern circulation of the manuscript—Cooke's pirating of the treatise (1601) along with its full translation in *Hakluytus Posthumous* (1625)—is indicative of the demand that English consumers had for information from inside the Iberian empires. In *Writing Captivity in the Early Modern Atlantic*, Lisa Voigt focuses on the role that captives played in circulating knowledge and authority in transatlantic contexts. She finds that,

Englishmen like Raleigh, Hakluyt, and Purchas viewed such captives—as well as captured texts like Cardim's—as valuable resources in the promotion of English imperial expansion and the propagation of knowledge about the New World, whether for religious or political purposes. (294)

For collectors such as Hakluyt and Purchas, Cardim's treatise represented a desirable acquisition, given that he provides a detailed account of Brazilian natural resources in addition to a wealth of ethnographic information on Tupi people and customs.

Due to the protectionist policies of the Hapsburgs in Iberia, this information was coveted among competing imperial powers, as evinced in the pirating of Cardim's manuscript by Cooke (in the physical sense) and then Purchas (in the literary sense). As Voigt's research on the circulation of knowledge demonstrates,

This mercantilist model [producing English goods to sell in American markets or commodifying American goods to be distributed in European markets] can also describe the economy of knowledge production represented by Hakluyt's and Purchas's travel collections—a geographical division of labor whereby a metropolitan historian appropriates and reworks the “raw materials” of travelers' accounts. (266)

These tales—or pilgrimages as they were known in Purchas's encyclopedias—were an integral part of a newfound market in print production, which detailed sought-after (but limited) information on exotic land and peoples.¹³⁸ Cardim never did recover his manuscript, and Purchas comments to his reader that: “Great losse had the Author of his worke...” (417). According to Purchas, “I may well adde this Jesuite to the English Voyages, as being an English prize and captive” (*Hakluytus Posthumous* 418).

¹³⁸ In her study of travel narratives and captivity, Voigt pulls from Ralph Bauer's work on *The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures: Empire, Travel, Modernity*. In this investigation, Bauer references Purchas's model of knowledge creation and notes that, “By employing the language of divided labor – of pioneers and engineers, laborers, masons, brick-layers, surveyors, and architects – Purchas creates his own authority and license to commentate, excise, and paraphrase his sources” (83). Bauer goes on to specify that, “He fashions his editorial role as a Baconian collector who stands somewhere between the empirical pilgrim and the speculating historian, straddling the divide between the two professions in the production of modern knowledge” (83).

Purchas' characterization of Cardim as "English prize and captive" points to a larger tension at play between the English (Protestant) nation and Iberians (Catholics) to the south. We see this, for example, as Purchas, "in many places supplied defects, amended errors, illustrated with notes, and thus finished and furnished for the publike to view" (417). For example, Purchas' annotations in the margins of the translation draw his reader's attention to the "[P]ortugals use of savages" (441) and the "[U]nchristian impietie of some Portugals" (443). He highlights the "[W]eaknesses of the Portugals in Brasill, how much and whence" (504), noting in particular that "Brasill [is] peopled with exiles" (504). According to Purchas, because of "Portugals wily manner of wronging the Natives" (507) this was a "[W]ast of the Indians by Portugals" (506). Purchas comments in the margin also suggest that it is the Portuguese that might be the real cannibals, given their "[U]nchristian Antichristian wickednesse" (508). Purchas's representation of "Portugals" and their "Antichristian wickednesse" is part of the discourse of the Black Legend that began to circulate in the late sixteenth century.¹³⁹

In this sense, it is necessary to contextualize Purchas's anti-Iberian sentiment within the religious frame of the Protestant Reformation. Ralph Bauer lends further

¹³⁹ On the sixteenth-century roots of the Black Legend, see Bauer's *The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures* in which he finds that, "This Protestant propaganda campaign indicted Spanish cruelties against the Native Americans in order to create a philosophical pretext for English imperial ambitions..." (78); In her study *Writing Captivity in the Early Modern Atlantic*, Voigt additionally finds that, "Even Iberian narratives of the captivity of Iberians—not just Iberian denunciations of the enslavement of Amerindians, like Bartolomé de Las Casas's and Fernão Cardim's—could be used, quite contrary to the author's intentions, to promote the Black Legend of Spanish barbarism and Papist superstition" (326-7).

insight into the larger dynamic at play within the anti-Iberian undertones that color Purchas' commentary when he explains that,

Purchas, in the act of translating the travel accounts of the Iberian discoverers conquerors, and missionaries, appropriates the knowledge contained therein while yet discrediting the authority of their authors, and thus paving the way ideologically and epistemologically for Britain's physical annexation of American territory claimed by Spain. (*The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures* 92)

Bauer goes on to clarify that the tensions displayed in Purchas' narrative go beyond a "monolithic English inter-imperial rivalry with Spain" (92); he argues that, despite their moral indignation to Iberian conquest, these were the very models that sixteenth-century Elizabethans looked to emulate.¹⁴⁰ As self-proclaimed inheritor of Hakluyt's work, Purchas' commentary in the margins of his translation of Cardim's manuscript demonstrate the way in which Purchas perpetuates the anti-Iberian sentiment that characterized England.¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Bauer goes on to explain that, "During the first couple of decades of the seventeenth century, however, this rhetoric of emulation and similitude in English historiography about the New World gradually gave way to a new rhetoric that identified 'British' imperial enterprise as being essentially *different* from the 'Spanish' model of conquest, which became, as Jeffrey Knapp puts it, an example of 'Elizabethan colonialism gone wrong'" (*The Cultural Geography of Colonial American Literatures* 93).

¹⁴¹ In the context of travel narratives from India, Joan-Pau Rubiés notes that: "Catholics Purchas rhetorically equated with gentile idolaters, and found standard arguments for this equation in the similarity he detected between popish rites and those of the ancient Chaldeans and Egyptians. Not only were Catholics drinking from the original fountains of paganism, they were also surpassed by the gentiles in their devotions (and here Purchas could quote the very Jesuits as witnesses to the asceticism of the devilish Indian

In reference to his primary motivation to compile an encyclopedic compendium of travel narratives titled “Relations of the World and the Religions Observed in all Ages and places Discovered, from the Creation unto this Present,” Purchas cites his religious dedication to his Protestant faith as his main drive. However, he also notes that his multi-volume editions of *Purchas His Pilgrimage* were put to use in diverse areas due to the specialized interests of different readers. In his final printed volume of travel narratives, *Purchas his Pilgrimage* (London 1626), Purchas writes to his reader directly to explain the value of his work:

If thou demandest what profit may be hereof; I answere, that heere
Students of all sorts may finde matter fitting their studies: The natural
Philosophers may obserue the different constitution and commixtion of the
Elements, their diuers working in diuers places, the varietie of heauenly
influence, of the yeerely seasons, of the Creatures in the Aire, Water,
Earth: They which delight in State-affaires, may obserue the varietie of
States and Kingdomes, with their differing Lawes, Polities, and Customes,
their Beginnings and Endings, The Diuine, besides the former, may heer
contemplate the workes of God, not in Creation alone, but in his Iustice
and Prouidence, pursuing sinne euery where with such dreadfull plagues;
both bodily, in rooting vp and pulling downe the mightiest Empires; and
especially in spiritual iudgements, giuing vp so great a part of the World
unto the *efficacie of Errour in strong delusions, that having forsaken the*

yogis, thus taking the wind out of their own claims to sanctity)” (*Travel and Ethnology in the Renaissance* 351)

*Fountain of liuing waters, they should dig unto themselues these broken
Pits that can hold no water;* deuout in the superstitions, and superstitious
in their deuotions; agreeing all in this, that there should be a Religion,
disagreeing from each other, and the Trvth, in the practice thereof. (3-4;
author's emphasis)

Despite his own religious frame, Purchas also recognized that his work could benefit others: "At last I resolved to turne the pleasure of my studies into studious paines, that others might againe, by delightfull studie, turne my paines into their pleasure." As Purchas notes, his encyclopedic compendium of global travel narratives might prove profitable to diverse consumers, such as natural historians, royal bureaucrats, or religious readers interested in "spiritual judgments."

In addition to the more philosophical and theological pursuits that Purchas outlines for his reader, travel narratives provide significant information regarding how to successfully establish a colonial settlement. For example, Cardim's initial comments on the climate and land of Brazil provide a general overview of what settlers can expect: a substantial river system, important for the trafficking of goods and labor; land full of many waters and mighty rivers; weather patterns that lend themselves to year-round fertility, which allows for groves that are green continuously; accessible ports; water sources and dietary provisions suitable to the constitution of the European settler (*Tratados* 63). Amidst the positive aspects of the climate and topography of coastal Brazil, Cardim does warn that the settler might want for clothing given that "[p]ara vestir há poucas comodidades por não se dar na terra mais que algodão" [for dressing there are

few commodities due because of the land not giving more than cotton] (63). In an act of consolation, however, Cardim concludes by reminding the reader of the facility with which livestock and sugar can be maintained by transplanting European goods to the Americas, which proved fundamental to plantation settlement throughout the colonies: “e do mais é terra farta, principalmente de gados e açúcares” [and furthermore, the land is principally livestock and sugars] (63).¹⁴² Given its exposition of such practical information for colonial settlement, understanding the significance of the translation of Cardim’s texts for English readers is embedded within the larger context of the imperial race to colonize the Americas.

As we have seen, Cardim’s work on the land and people of Brazil also provides an exhaustive view of local pharmacopeia, a necessity for colonial survival. In this vein, in addition to the *mezinhas* [local medicines] that he identifies within his treatise, Purchas notes in the margin of his translation reveal that Cardim’s manuscripts also included some medicinal recipes. He writes that,

I finde at the end of the Booke some medicinall receipts, and the name subscribed to Ir. Manoel Tristan Enfermeiro do Colegio da Baya: whom I imagine to have been Author of this Treatise. Cooke reported that he had it of a Friar: but the name Jesus divers times on the top of the page, and

¹⁴² See Wallerstein, *Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*: “Sugar cultivation began on the Mediterranean islands, later moved to the Atlantic islands, then crossed the Atlantic to Brazil and the West Indies. Slavery followed sugar. As it moved, the ethnic composition of the slave class was transformed” (88-9).

often mention of the Fathers and societie make me think him a brother of that order, besides the state-tractate following. (417)

As we now know, Jesuit Manoel Tristão did not write the treatise that Purchas included in his travel narratives, though he did run the infirmary at the College of Bahia, where he would have been in close contact with Cardim.

Despite Purchas' acknowledgement of a set of medicinal recipes included in Cardim's treatise, he does not include them in the translation of the manuscript in *Hakluytus Posthumous*. While Purchas' commentary in the margins does not provide any information regarding the contents of these recipes, a clue can be found in the meeting notes of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh from 11 May 1871. These notes suggest that the recipes were related to *ipecacuanha*, an herb native to Brazil (*Transactions of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh*).¹⁴³ In his "Remarks on Plants furnishing varieties of *Ipecacuan*, and on the Cultivation of *Cephaelis Ipecacuanha*," Professor Balfour finds that, "The native tribes of Brazil have long known of the efficacy of the Ipecacuan root in the treatment of disease. The native names for it are Poaya de Mato and Cipo. In the Minas-Geraes it is called Ipecacuanha. The Ipecacuan plant appears to have been first noticed by Samuel Purchas in 'His Pilgrimes'" (154).

Given that the Botanical Society of Edinburgh credits Purchas with the "discovery" of the medicinal qualities of *ipecacuanha*, it is evident that Cardim's observations on the land and people of Brazil served as a foundational source on Brazilian botany in the northern Atlantic, albeit via Purchas' translation. Cardim

¹⁴³ The Botanical Society of Edinburgh was founded in 1836 and then became the Botanical Society in Scotland in 1991.

describes *ipecacuanha* in detail in the body of his treatise. Set alongside other “ervas que servem para mezinhas” [herbs that serve for local medicines], Cardim describes the herb as a cure for excessive bleeding (*câmaras de sangue*). As he details how to prepare the medicament, Cardim instructs the reader to,

[d]eita somente quatro o cinco folhinhas, cheira muito onde quer que está, mas o cheiro é *fartum* e terrível; esta raiz moída, botada em um pouco de água se põe a serenar uma noite toda, e pela manhã se aguenta a água com a mesma raiz moída, e cosada se bebe somente a água, e logo se faz purgar de maneira que cessam as câmaras de todo. (120)

only put down four or five little leaves, it smells a lot wherever it is, but the smell is *fartum* and terrible; this ground up root, set in a little bit of water is put to soften one full night, and by the morning the water with the same ground up root is taken, and only the cooked water is drunk, and then one is made to purge such that the bleeding stops entirely.

Timothy Walker’s research on the history of medicine in the early modern Portuguese Atlantic indicates that *ipecacuanha* is one of many medicines that the Portuguese extracted from Brazilian natural world. In his essay “The Medicines Trade in the Portuguese Atlantic World,” Walker specifies that,

Indigenous medicinal plants that Portuguese settlers adopted and exported from Brazil in significant quantities beginning in the sixteenth century included derivatives of *cacau* (medicinal chocolate and cocoa butter, the latter used to treat skin ailments); *ipecacuanha* (also called *cipó*), a

reliable emetic and diaphoretic; cinchona barked (also called *quina* or *quineira*), arguably the most important remedy found in the New World, essential to treating malaria and other tropical fevers; *jalapa*, an effective purgative; *copaiba*, to treat gonorrhea; and *salsaparilha*, administered against syphilis and skin diseases. More than any others, these Brazilian remedies circulated in the Atlantic medicines trade, becoming commercially and medically significant, and achieving widespread usage elsewhere in the Portuguese empire. (5)

Not only does Walker's research show that natives commonly used these remedies, but he goes on to point out that, "All of these substances were standard, commonly stocked medicines in Brazilian apothecary shops in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and also could be found in continental Portuguese pharmacies" (5).¹⁴⁴

As Balfour's nineteenth-century reports from the *Transactions of the Botanical Society of Edinburgh* suggest, interest in Brazilian medicine was not limited to the Iberian world. Balfour's observations indicate that the medicinal recipes from Purchas' translation in 1625 are derived from *ipecacuanha*, which he traces to the *Historia Naturalise Brasiliae* (1648) by Willem Piso and George Marcgrave. From there, Balfour

¹⁴⁴ In addition to the medicaments already cited here, Walker goes on to point out that "Other plant-derived drugs originating with indigenous practices in Brazil but found inculcated in the Lusophone world included *abuta* root (drunk in a decoction to treat fever, or as a purgative and stimulant), *tacamahaca* gum (a bitter resin used as a topical balm), *guaiaco* gum (used to treat wounds or sores, or mixed in a beverage and drunk to ease sore throat pain), *mechoacão* (a white *jalapa* root), and *almécega* gum (a tree resin to relieve pain). Brazilian healers employed maracujá (passion fruit) juice to treat fevers, pineapple juice (ananás) to dissolve kidney stones, cashew fruit juice (cajú) for fever and stomach ailments, and Inga fruit (Ingá) for addressing liver problems" ("The Medicines Trade in the Portuguese Atlantic World" 5).

finds that, “It was then introduced into Europe. Grenier, a merchant, brought it to Paris as a pharmaceutical remedy, and as such it was used by Jean Adrien Helvetius, a medical man. It was brought under the notice of Louis XIV. Experiments were made at the Hotel Dieu as to its efficacy in diarrhoea and dysentery” (155). As the transaction from the botanical society suggest, interest in *ipecacuanha* continued well into the nineteenth century, and Balfour cites that,

From 1835-37, Weddell says that in the neighbourhood of Villa Maria (in Upper Paraguay) 150,000 kilos. of Ipecacuan were gathered, and there were from 1200 to 1500 collectors in the forests. Men, women, children, free people, and slaves, went into the depths of the Paraguayan forests, and spent some months in collecting the roots. At that time the price of 141 kilos. was 50 to 60 francs at Villa Maria, and 78 to 90 at Rio Janeiro. (157)

Balfour explains that a strain of the *ipecacuanha* plant taken from Rio de Janeiro corresponds to “the Ipecacuan root of English commerce” (154), indicative that the plant eventually circulated outside of Iberian-controlled trade networks and was traded by the English as well.

Whether or not the medicinal information taken from the Jesuit College of Bahia was related to the *ipecacuanha* plant, it is possible that Purchas saw no value in the American pharmacopeia and discarded the prescription, deeming it worthless. Or, perhaps, and what I find to be more probable, the medicinal recipes were excluded from *Hakluytus Posthumous* (1625) given their potential commercial value for pharmaceutical

distribution on larger markets and, therefore, Purchas' reticence to publish them here.¹⁴⁵

It is unclear exactly what Purchas did with the recipes themselves; however, their elision from the translation of Cardim's larger body of work poses important questions regarding the value of American medicine in the early modern marketplace. Focusing on secrets and monopolies in her essay "Prospecting for Drugs: European Naturalists in the West Indies," Londa Schiebinger points out that:

The effort to secure secrets against enemies or competitors was not unique to the vanquished in the colonies. Europeans, of course, had many secrets of their own. Before patents, guilds, kept the techniques of their trade secret. In the medical domain many physicians and apothecaries protected their remedies by keeping recipes secret until they could sell them for a good price. (130)

The circulation (and secrecy) of Cardim's recipe for a medicament based on *ipecacuanha* within the Western archive further evinces this competition for medicinal information in the early modern Atlantic World. Colonial botany was a significant market for venture capitalists interested in commodifying American natural resources for their own gain.

The piracy of Cardim's treatise on Brazil reveals the way in which information-gathering processes in the Atlantic World relied heavily on reports of personal experience and

¹⁴⁵ See Schiebinger (*Plants and Empire*): focusing on the eighteenth century, but applicable to this seventeenth-century context, Schiebinger's research demonstrates that, "Colonies served as fertile ground for the procurement and production of tropical plants that would not grow in harsh European climates. Colonies also served as captive markets for exports; states fill their coffers by monopolizing trade, imposing taxes on imports, and granting licenses for exports. Naturalists saw coffee, cacao, ipecacuanha (an emetic), jalap (a laxative), and Peruvian bark as moneymakers for king and country—and, often, for themselves" (6).

testimony by ocular witnesses from inside Iberian empires. In large part, European interimperial rivalries in the early modern Atlantic sprang from a race to commodify American nature through European trade-based expansion; this race required that imperial subjects run reconnaissance missions, or, at least, that they pirate such missions, as we see in the fate of Cardim's text at the hands of the English.

At the turn of the sixteenth century, much of coastal South America had been usurped or claimed by the Spanish and Portuguese empires, united at this time under a single sovereign (1580-1640). The Hapsburg sovereigns were intent on protecting their new land and keeping information about the American natural world secret from their rivals sitting to the north (the French, the Dutch, and the English). As Cardim's treatise evinces, religious interventions in the Americas were politically and economically tied to Iberian imperial expansion. Jesuit missionaries had access to the practical knowledge that Amerindians had of their natural world: local botany—and knowledge of the natural world more generally (i.e. what to eat and how to eat, or what not to eat because it was poisonous)—represented the pragmatic type of information that missionaries extracted from indigenous confessions and their study of indigenous traditions, which they needed to sustain life in colonial settlements. In addition to mapping out potential commodities from American abundance, the demand for travel narratives from inside of the Iberian empire, as we see on the English book market, also worked to commodify Jesuit manuscripts in their own right.

Conclusion

The history of Cardim's manuscript is significant because it represents the first symbolic mapping of Tupi and Tapuia medical knowledge by Europeans during the initial phases of colonial bioprospecting.¹⁴⁶ As we see in the case of Cardim, Jesuit missionaries appropriated and disseminated information about indigenous beliefs, practices, and knowledge of the natural world throughout their long-distance exchange network in the form of natural histories. In practice, missionaries criminalized the application of medical knowledge by non-Christian healers—i.e. “demonic” rituals performed by “sorcerers”—while they appropriated the knowledge embedded within these practices and administered it for their own gain. Despite the fact that Jesuits saw the Devil's influence in Tupi cosmology and rituals, missionaries paid careful attention to these traditions and practices because they embodied valuable knowledge, which proved useful for conversion. Paradoxically, the use of local pharmacopeia garnered from pagan rituals, informed by the Devil himself, was integral to their zealous campaign for conversion. Thus, Cardim's text is representative of the colonial ambivalence ingrained in the European ethnographic desire to chart, observe, and classify Amerindian lands and people.

¹⁴⁶ Schiebinger's research (*Plants and Empire*) argues that, “Historians of the eighteenth century have also begun to detail how botany—expertise in bioprospecting, plant identification, transport, and acclimatization—worked hand in hand with European colonial expansion. Early conquistadors entered the Americas looking for gold and silver. Be the eighteenth century, naturalists sought ‘green gold’” (7). While early conquistadors did have an eye out for gold and silver, the study that I present here demonstrates that, from the outset, European missionaries and colonists were equally interested in local botany. For a study on sixteenth- and seventeenth-century New World medicines, for example, see Bleichmar, “Books, Bodies, and Fields,” *Colonial Botany*, 83-99.

Cardim's narrative stems from a colonial semiotics in which demonization and appropriation form the logical binary through which medical information was processed and possessed. Antiquated theories related to the geographic superiority of Greco-Roman populations were adopted by Christian natural philosophy in Western Europe and used to legitimate the possession of non-Christian lands and people. In addition to using natural philosophy to justify the European displacement and dispossession of Amerindians, Cardim was also careful to take note of goods and resources that might be of value (or dangerous) for potential colonial settlements. His letters and larger treatise were written to send news back to one of the main control centers of the Company of Jesus: the Universidade de Coimbra in Portugal,¹⁴⁷ the site at which much of the information and knowledge from Portuguese missions throughout the East and West Indies were organized, processed, and catalogued; it also served as Portugal's only academic institution for the instruction of medicine during the early modern period.

The Jesuits occupied a privileged position in the colonial economics of Brazil as a result of their centrality to the imperial enterprise in the territory; thus, a Jesuit treatise on the botany and ethnography of Brazil was a prized possession among competing empires

¹⁴⁷ Because of the nautical strength of Portugal during the early stages of Iberian expansion, the university served as an important hub, both geographically and symbolically, along the trade route that connected the East Indies with the West. See Palmira Fontes da Costa and Henrique Leitão, "Portuguese Imperial Science, 1450-1800. A Historiographical Review": "From the point of view of the point of view of the history of science, the network of educational institutions that the Jesuits established in Portugal and its empire is of great interest and corresponds to a new situation. Unlike any other educational system ever planted in Portugal, the Jesuit system of was organically connected to other institutions in Europe and to the missionary activities outside of Europe. It was a stable and reasonably well organized long-range network of communication within which different scientific activities were practiced" (42).

of Europe. Within the larger context of European policies on imperial expansion, it is imperative that the ethnographic drive that motivates Cardim's treatise on Brazil not be divorced from the mercantilist trajectory behind developments in Western science and medicine. For this reason, Jesuit writings were of significant interest for the competing European empires. These accounts were a product of this emerging market for information about the natural world and its diverse inhabitants. For the Company of Jesus, missionaries strategically wrote natural histories from diverse parts of the globe to serve the Order as how-to manuals for spiritual conquest and colonial settlement. In the next chapter, I turn to José de Acosta's *Historia moral y natural de las Indias* (1590), a significant counterpart to Cardim's treatise on Brazil. The juxtaposition of these two natural histories helps to outline the larger trajectory of Jesuit manuscripts on Atlantic circuits; in this sense, the wide dissemination and translation of Acosta's natural history is indicative of the circulation that Cardim's manuscripts might have enjoyed if the English had not stolen them.

Chapter 3

The Spiritual Politics of Ritual in Colonial Mexico: José de Acosta's *Historia natural y moral de las Indias*

Spanish Jesuit José de Acosta's *Historia natural y moral de las Indias: En que se tratan de las cosas notables del cielo, y elementos, metales, plantas y animales dellas y los ritos, y ceremonias, leyes y gobierno, y guerras de los indios* [Natural and Moral History of the Indies: In which the most notable things of the sky, and metal elements and their animals and rites, and ceremonies, laws and government, and wars of the Indians] (Sevilla, 1590) is a seven-book encyclopedia that details the land and peoples of the Spanish American territories in the West Indies, and one of the most cited missionary works on the Americas. Acosta wrote the *De procuranda Indorum salute* [On how to gain salvation of the Indians] (1588) primarily based on his travels throughout South America and New Spain. The first segment in his two-part compilation was crafted as a missionary how-to manual for Jesuit evangelization, which Acosta combines with its philosophical counterpart, *De natura Novi Orbis* [On the nature of the New World] (1582). Acosta went on to expand his *De procuranda* and *De natura*, which he then translated into Castilian and supplemented with additional information primarily centered on Inca and Nahua rites, ceremonies, and general histories.

Acosta, just as the Jesuit founder Ignatius of Loyola prescribes in his letter to Gaspar Berceo,¹⁴⁸ begins his natural and moral history with the promise to highlight all things “extraordinary” in the West Indies:

En los dos primeros libros se trata lo que toca al cielo y temperamento y habitación de aquel orbe ... En los otros dos libros siguientes se trata lo que de elementos y mixtos naturales, que son metales, plantas y animales, parece notable en Indias. De los hombres y de sus hechos (quiero decir de los mismos indios, y de sus ritos y costumbres, y gobierno y guerras y sucesos). (14)

In the first two books I deal with everything concerning the heavens and climate and living conditions of that hemisphere ... In the two subsequent books I deal with whatever is remarkable about the elements and natural mixtures, such as metals, plants, and animals, that are found in the Indies. The remaining books describe what I have been able to discover and what seems worthy of telling about men and their deeds (I mean the Indians themselves and their rites and customs, government and wars, and great events).¹⁴⁹ (11)

Acosta goes on to point out that, “[p]odrá cada uno para sí, sacar también algún fruto, pues por bajo que sea el sujeto, el hombre sabio saca para sí sabiduría y de los más viles y pequeños animales se puede tirar muy alta consideración y muy provechosa filosofía”

¹⁴⁸ For an initial discussion on the import of Loyola’s letter to Berceo, see the Introduction.

¹⁴⁹ All quotes in English are taken from López-Morillas’s translation of Acosta’s *Natural and Moral History* (ed. Mangan).

(14) [each reader can also achieve some useful knowledge, for no matter how unimportant the subject a wise man can learn wisdom for himself, and even from the lowest and smallest creatures very lofty thoughts, and very useful philosophy, may be extracted (12)], thus fulfilling another of St. Ignatius of Loyola's requirements for missionary writings, that they provided information for the use of a broader, secular readership.

In this excerpt, Acosta argues that—despite the fact that they are derived “even from the lowest and smallest creatures very lofty thoughts”—“Indian” rites and customs can still be “useful philosophy” when “extracted” by missionaries. For Acosta and the Jesuit Order, they understood natural histories as a tool for salvation and wrote them because, “[n]o es sólo gusto sino provecho también, mayormente para los que los han de tratar, pues la noticia de sus cosas convida a que nos den crédito en las nuestras, y enseñan en gran parte cómo se deben tratar” (357) [it is not only pleasure but also profit, particularly for those who will be called upon to deal with them; for knowledge of their affairs tends to make them trust ours and shows us to a considerable degree how they should be treated (380)]. For Jesuit missionaries, their natural histories read as a road map to pacification, settlement, and conversion, and the “pagan” souls that they won over represent the “profit” that they gained in their work for God. However, spiritual profit was not the only thing that missionaries were after, as Loyola makes clear in his letter to Berceo when he reminds missionary writers that their audience also extends to, “Persons of importance in the city who read with great profit to themselves the letters from the Indies” (326).

As we have seen in Jesuit letters from Brazil, Loyola outlines his expectations for missionaries writing from the frontiers of Iberian imperial expansion in his letter to Father Gaspar Berceo (Rome, 24 February 1554)¹⁵⁰ in which he encourages Berceo—or any other missionaries that might be privy to these instructions via the letter—to send “[i]nformation about anything that appears extraordinary.” He goes on to instruct that, “[t]his condiment for the taste of certain innocent curiosity in men can be sent in the letters themselves or on separate sheets” (326). In particular, he reminds missionaries to write of, “the length of the days in summer and winter, when the summer begins, whether the shadow falls to the left or to the right” (325-26). Loyola also makes it clear in this letter that missionary inquiries into colonial nature were of potential economic benefit for “persons of importance” that might use this information for their own agenda in the Americas.¹⁵¹ As we see in Loyola’s letter to Berceo, the task at hand for Jesuit missionaries was to write and describe the sensory experience of American landscapes within the limits of “innocent curiosity.”

Curiosity is a loaded term within the parameters of early modern scientific discourse, still bound by the limits of Christianity, and, for Jesuit missionaries, it took on a practical component as they described life in the colonies. For example, Acosta—in his chapter on “How the natural history of the Indies is pleasant and enjoyable”—finds that, “la relación de cosas naturales, aunque la bajeza de muchos gustos suele más ordinario parar en lo menos útil, que es un deseo de saber cosas nuevas, que propiamente llamamos

¹⁵⁰ See *Letters of St. Ignatius of Loyola*, (trans.) William J. Young, S.J., 325-6.

¹⁵¹ Also see the Introduction for a broad overview of Loyola’s letter to Berceo in the context of Jesuit missionary writings in the Americas.

curiosidad” (99) [the description of natural things can serve many good ends, although the low quality of many tastes usually stops with the least useful of these, which is a desire to know new things, a trait that we can properly call curiosity (100)]. This approach to nature is rooted in Aristotelian notions of the causes and effects of natural phenomena, a natural philosophy that was revised and translated via medieval scholastic traditions in Western Europe, inherited and reworked by humanist reformers of the early modern period.¹⁵² For Acosta, the curiosities found in natural histories are “good” as long as their investigation furthers human understanding of the Divine Order of nature and the missionary’s place in it. This type of “excellent theology” requires that Jesuits link their scientific pursuits to the glory of God so that His will may be done on earth as it is in heaven. Any pursuit of knowledge beyond this point would signal that the observer of the natural world had overstepped the bounds placed upon scientific inquiry by the Catholic Church.

The question of limits to the study of nature is further complicated in the case of the Americas, given that missionaries would need to study and document “superstitious” indigenous rites and traditions in order to recognize demonic magic to eliminate or Christianize it. To understand the nuances at play in Acosta’s assessment of the relationship between science and curiosity, we can turn to Andrés I. Prieto’s study

¹⁵² Daston and Park (*Wonders and the Order of Nature*) argue that “[t]he single most important factor was probably the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century European voyages of exploration, to Africa, to Asia, and ultimately to the “New World” of America, which yielded wonder on top of wonder. Many of these new marvels had never appeared in ancient texts; whether reported, depicted, or physically collected, they quickly overflowed the traditional confines of erudition and of medical and pharmacological inquiry to demand empirical study in their own right” (136).

Missionary Scientists, which demonstrates that, for Jesuit missionaries, the study of nature was purposefully limited to an Aristotelian notion of *scientia*:

In practice, this meant a limitation on the study of nature. The Aristotelian definition of *scientia* excluded experimental procedures and the manipulation of nature to yield practical results or even artificial miracles, as promised by, for instance, the practitioners of the *magia naturalis*, one of the natural philosophies denounced by the church as superstitious and an example of *vana curiositas*. (163)

Despite these limitations, some Jesuits—such as Hernando Castrillo—did lobby for certain forms of natural magic to be permissible within the bounds of Church-sanctioned magic.¹⁵³ To avoid the potential pitfalls that any unwieldy curiosity might cause, Acosta is careful to frame his own observations within the bounds of “good philosophy” and “excellent theology” so as to not enter into the realm of *vana curiositas*, as noted by Prieto, and argues that his observations are pertinent information for the salvation of souls.

As he discusses the importance of natural history, Acosta assures the reader that, in his study of “Indians” in the West Indies, this line of “good philosophy” and “excellent theology” guides him. Acosta outlines these parameters within the larger frame of scientific curiosities and explains that, “Toda la historia es de suyo agradable, y a quien tiene consideración algo más levantada, es también provechosa para alabar al Autor de

¹⁵³ For an in-depth discussion on the role of occult philosophy in Jesuit science, see my discussion of Hernando Castrillo’s text *Historia, y magia natural, o ciencia de filosofía oculta* (1649) in the introduction.

toda la naturaleza... (99) [All natural history is in itself agreeable, and for anyone who thinks about it in a somewhat loftier sense it is also useful for praising the Author of all nature (99)]. He goes on to say that, “Quien pasare adelante y llegare a entender las causas naturales de los efectos, terná el ejercicio de buena filosofía” (99) [Anyone who goes further, and comes to understand the natural causes of effects, will be exercising good philosophy (99)]. For Acosta, “Quien subiere más en su pensamiento, y mirando al Sumo y Primer Artífice de todas estas maravillas, gozare de su saber y grandeza, diremos que trata excelente teología” (99) [We may say of anyone whose thought rises higher and contemplates the Highest and Supreme Artificer of all these marvels, that he will rejoice in God’s wisdom and greatness and will be studying excellent theology (99)]. As we have seen throughout this study, Acosta’s use of these terms are a product of the way in which Jesuit naturalists were bound to the theological restrictions placed on members of the Order in their study of people and land in the Americas.

This excerpt illuminates what natural history meant for Jesuit missionaries, who advocated for the study of nature to be done in the interest of spiritual salvation.¹⁵⁴

Acosta firmly believed in the importance of learning Mexican history “por ser en materias diferentes de nuestra Europa, como lo son aquellas naciones, da mayor gusto

¹⁵⁴ See Pagden, “A Programme for Comparative Ethnology,” *The Fall of Man*, 146-97. In this chapter, Pagden argues that, “The idea of ‘moral history,’ a history, that is, of *mores*—of customs—was an unusual one in the sixteenth century... [Acosta] was even somewhat apprehensive about how his work would be received. Reading a history of ‘barbarians’ was, he feared, likely to be regarded in much the same light as reading romances of chivalry. But for Acosta the Indian world was not, like the world of Amadís, Palmerín or Don Belianís, a dangerous fantasy whose irreality might endanger the sanity of those foolish enough to read about it. It was, however barbaric, still a real world and, he assured his potential readers, there was much to be gained from studying it...” (149). Also see Sabine MacCormack, *Religion in the Andes*, 264-66.

entender de raíz su origen, su modo de parecer, sus sucesos prósperos y adversos” (357) [because those nations are in many ways different from our Europe, our pleasure is all the greater in fully discovering their origins, their ways of behaving, and the things that have happened to them both for good and ill (380)]. For Acosta, it was necessary to understand these differences as a strategy for conversion, which was his ultimate line of defense against censorship from the Inquisition. We see the way in which Acosta walks the line between religious restraint and ethnographic documentation as he goes on to discuss, “Qué provecho se ha de sacar de la relación de las supersticiones de los indios” (311) [The benefit that can be drawn from an account of the Indian’s superstitions (327)]; Acosta defends his own writings on pagan rituals and traditions in the Americas and argues that the study of the natural world and indigenous moral conduct “*no sólo es útil, sino del todo necesario*, que los cristianos maestros de la ley de Cristo, sepan los errores y supersticiones de los antiguos, para ver si clara o disimuladamente las usan...” (311; my emphasis) [*is not only useful but absolutely necessary* for Christians and teachers of the law of Christ to be familiar with the errors and superstitions of the ancients and to observe whether the Indians use them nowadays, either openly or secretly (327)].

Walter Mignolo addresses the paternalistic logic that underwrites Acosta’s approach to documenting “superstitious” rites and traditions in his introduction to Frances López-Morillas’ English translation of Acosta’s *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*; in this commentary, he positions Acosta’s ideological frame as “a form of liberation theology.” Mignolo suggests that,

Writing the history, which indeed is mainly a description of nature and mores, was for him a preliminary step toward the conversion of the Indians to Christianity. The project of “liberating” (with reference to the theology of salvation) the Indians from the devil was simultaneously an ethical project designed to achieve the “spiritual conquest” of the Indians Occidentales. (xxi)

It is within this general frame of “liberation theology” that Acosta justified his documentation of “Indian’s superstitions,” which is evident as he asserts that, “Así que en tierras de indios, cualquier noticia que de aquesto se da a los españoles, es importante para el bien de los indios...” (312) [Hence, in Indian lands, any information on this subject given to the Spaniards is important for the Indians’ own good (327)]. He goes on to write that, “También puede servir para conocer la soberbia y envidia, y engaños y mañas del demonio con los que tiene cautivos...” (311-312) [It can also serve to make us recognize the devil’s pride and envy and the deceits and tricks he has practiced on those whom he has enslaved (327)]. In this sense, Acosta’s natural and moral history is part of a larger effort put forth by the Company of Jesus to mitigate Satan’s influence in the West Indies.

In what follows, I focus on Acosta’s representation of Nahua medicine, myth, and ritual to analyze the spiritual politics of Nahua-Christian encounters in colonial Mexico. I pay close attention to how Acosta’s moralizing lens colors these accounts in his natural and moral history. To do this, I begin with an analysis of the way in which Acosta understood the correlate between missionary intervention in central Mexico and

significant outbreaks of disease among indigenous populations. As Jesuit missionaries battled Nahua healers and spiritual leaders for religious and political authority in Mexico, they applied the same diabolical rhetoric to their opposition that missionaries used in Brazil. In both instances, native healers and spiritual leaders were often at the forefront of indigenous-led resistance movements, as the latter worked to contest and negotiate Jesuit attempts at “spiritual conquest” in the region. I then turn to ritual plant use to understand how natives preserved their own sense of agency and power throughout the colonial period and beyond. Finally, I analyze the way in which religion and medicine were further complicated as missionaries propagated the spread of European disease throughout Anáhuac; as in Brazil, these spiritual politics centered on ritual, the power to heal, and spiritual authority among native communities in Mexico. First, however, an overview of Acosta’s works in the context of Jesuit missionary writings is necessary in order to understand the layers of source material that inform his natural and moral history.

Manuscript Circulation in Colonial Mexico

From 1571 to 1587, Acosta spent his time surveying Spanish controlled missions in the Americas. On 9 March 1571, Acosta arrived in Seville to prepare for his journey to Peru on the fleet of Menéndez de Avilés. One month later, on 9 April 1571, Acosta traveled from Seville to Sanlúcar where he remained until he disembarked for the Americas. In his transatlantic voyage, Acosta stopped over in Santo Domingo and made his way to his final destination in Lima, Peru. During the two-year span of 1573-1575,

Acosta traveled throughout Spanish South America in the interest of the ecclesiastical administration of the Society of Jesus. This mission took him through Cuzco, Arequipa, La Paz, Chuquisaca, Pilcomayo, as well as to the mines of Potosí. On 1 September 1575, Acosta assumed the position of Rector at the Jesuit College of Lima, and between 1576 and 1581 Acosta also served as Provincial Father of Peru. He left this post on 25 May 1581, but continued on at the College of Lima.

In the spring of 1586, Acosta made his way to New Spain and docked in the port of Huatulco, he then continued on to Mexico City shortly thereafter, where he spent the majority of his time. Acosta ended his tour of Spanish America in May 1587, when he left Mexico in the company of Jesuit father Alonso Sánchez (based in the Philippines) and set sail on their return voyage to Spain. After several months at sea, the missionaries disembarked in Sanlúcar at the end of September of that same year, bringing their trip full circle. From there, Acosta went on to Madrid, where he stayed until he left for Rome in June 1588. At this point, Acosta had already compiled a large part of his manuscript on the natural and moral history of the West Indies, which was based on his voyage from Spain to the Caribbean, his travels through South America, and then to the central valley of Mexico. On 21 February 1589, Acosta submitted his natural and moral history—translated and expanded from the original version of the manuscript written in Latin—through the rigorous channels of censorship instituted by the Inquisition, which highly regulated print production at the time.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Portuondo (*Secret Science*) also points out that that, “In addition to trying to keep a close rein on cosmographical knowledge generated by the Casa de la Contratación and the Council of the Indies, the Council tried to keep private parties from divulging this

Finally, on 11 October 1589, Acosta was granted license to publish his work by Father Gonzalo Dávila, the Provincial Father of the Order based out of Toledo. The manuscript was then sent to Father Luís de León, an Augustinian friar who specialized in poetry,¹⁵⁶ and was granted ecclesiastical approval by him on 4 May 1589. On 1 March 1590, Acosta signed his *dedicatoria* to Princess Isabel Clara Eugenia in hopes that she would pass the work on to her father, King Phillip II. In that same year, the first edition of the history was published at the printing house of Juan de León in Seville. The fact that it took Acosta over a year to gain approval to publish his manuscript is related to the sensitivity of this type of information at the time and King Phillip II's hesitance to permit publications on the Americas. In 1577 the King had ordered that the Inquisition censor manuscripts that relayed information regarding indigenous rituals and traditions in the Americas, which posed an obvious problem for Acosta, as his treatise was dedicated to an exposition of this information specifically.

During his yearlong stay in Mexico, Acosta gathered the material necessary to write his version of pre-contact Mexican history for the Company of Jesus. To do so, he would depend on local sources to illuminate his larger natural and moral history on the matter. He explains that,

knowledge. Initial measures were aimed at containing politically sensitive material. Taking its procedural clues from the Inquisition, as early as 1527 the Council began issuing ad hoc bans on books that contained accounts of conquest and colonization that it found troubling and that could cause political or religious controversy. By the 1550s the Council began acting proactively, requesting that all books that touched on the subject of the New World be submitted to the Council for review prior to publication. The Council's policy was thus directed at censoring accounts of the discovery and colonization containing material considered incendiary in the already volatile regions of the New World" (104-5).

¹⁵⁶ See Acosta, *Natural and Moral History*, (ed.) Mangan, 4n2.

Deseando pues yo, tener alguna más especial noticia de sus cosas, hice diligencia con hombres pláticos y muy versados en tales materias, y de sus pláticas y relaciones copiosas pude sacar lo que juzgué bastar para dar noticia de las costumbres y hechos de estas gentes, y en lo natural de aquellas tierras y sus propiedades, con la experiencia de muchos años y con la diligencia de inquirir, y discurrir, y conferir con personas sabias y expertas... (13-14)

Because I wanted to have more specialized knowledge on the Indians' affairs, I resorted to experienced men who were very knowledgeable in these matters, and from their conversation and abundant written works I was able to extract material that I judged sufficient to write of the customs and deeds of those people and of the natural phenomenon of those lands and their characteristics, with the experience of many years and my diligence in inquiring and discussing and conferring with learned and expert persons. (9)

Acosta assures his reader that he “resorted to experienced men who were very knowledgeable in these matters” to verify the validity of the information that he presents in his natural and moral history.

Fellow missionaries Jesuit Juan de Tovar and Dominican Diego Durán served as significant informants for Acosta's inclusion of pre-contact history from central Mexico in his natural and moral history. Previous scholarship on the matter demonstrates that, though Tovar and Durán were not part of the same Order, Tovar pulled from Durán's

research on local rites and traditions in his own writings on indigenous history in Anáhuac.¹⁵⁷ Acosta, in turn, borrowed heavily from Tovar, largely due to the fact that he spent little time in Mexico compared to his missionary work in the Andes. Acosta writes to Tovar to inform him that, “[h]e de ver y pasar la *Historia Mexicana* que Vuestra Reverencia escribió y pienso holgarán también en Europa con ella, por la curiosidad que tiene acerca del gobierno y sucesión y ceremonias de los Indios mexicanos” (“Carta del padre José de Acosta para el padre Juan de Tovar” 55) [I will have seen and reviewed the *Mexican History* that Your Reverence wrote and I think [that] they will enjoy it in Europe, because of the curiosity that it has about the government and succession and ceremonies of the Mexican Indians].¹⁵⁸

Acosta goes on to ask that Tovar confirm the veracity of the curiosities that he records on Mexican rites and traditions in order to verify the credibility of Tovar’s documents; Acosta writes,

¹⁵⁷ Mangan summarizes this scholarship in her edition of Acosta’s *Natural and Moral History of the Indies* (trans. López Morillas), noting that Acosta borrowed heavily the “Tovar Manuscript” (ms. No. 1586 in the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University). Moreover, “Tovar read and used the work of his relative the Dominican Fray Diego Durán. Thus, many of Acosta’s Mexican revelations come, albeit indirectly, from Durán’s work” (10n2). Also see Cañizares-Esguerra (*How to Write the History of the New World*): “[A]costa provided European audiences with the most complete account of some six hundred years of the history of migrations and travails of those nations who had come to dominate central Mexico, including the peoples of Mexico-Tenochtitlan, Tlatelolco, Texcoco, and Tlaxcala, the allies of Cortés and the nemesis of the Mexica. Acosta had made available the collation and translation of indigenous sources undertaken by Jesuits like Tovar and Dominicans like Durán” (83).

¹⁵⁸ The translations of Acosta and Tovar’s letters are my own. The letters that I cite here can be found in José J. Fuente del Pilar’s edition of Tovar’s *Historia y creencias de los indios de México*.

Mas deseo me satisfaga Vuestra Reverencia algunas dudas que se me han ofrecido. La primera es ¿qué certidumbre y autoridad tiene esta relación o historia? La segunda ¿cómo pudieron los Indios sin escritura, pues no la usaron, conservar por tanto tiempo la memoria de tantas y tan varias cosas? Lo tercero ¿cómo se puede creer que las oraciones (o arengas) que se refieren en esta *Historia* las hayan hecho los antiguos retóricos que en ella se refieren? (55)

But I wish for Your Reverence to satisfy some doubts for me that have come to me. The first is what certainty and authority this relation or history has? The second, how were the Indians able to conserve for so long their memory of so many and so varied things without writing, given that they did not use it? The third thing, how is it to be believed that the prayers (or exhortations) that are referred to in this *History* have been done by the ancient rhetoricians that are referred to in it?

Acosta highlights these doubts, stemming from European views on writing and literacy,¹⁵⁹ “Pues sin letras no parece posible conservarse oraciones largas y en su género

¹⁵⁹ Several scholars have pointed to the exclusion of oral and nonalphabetic writing systems by early modern European notions of literacy. On Renaissance philosophy and western notions of literacy, see Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance*, 29-67; also see, Cañizares-Esguerra, *How to Write the History of the New World*: Cañizares-Esguerra’s conclusions on the reliability of indigenous sources contradict Mignolo’s observations on Spanish views on literacy in Euro-Amerindian encounters in the Renaissance. Cañizares-Esguerra asserts that, “For all his value at calling scholarly attention to the role that the ideology of literacy has played in colonial and postcolonial societies as a tool of ‘Western’ domination, Mignolo, however, is somewhat misleading. Take, for example, the case of Alva Ixtlilxochitl. Mignolo presents him as an isolated challenge to Spanish views of literacy, yet Alva Ixtlilxochitl was himself a production of

elegantes. A estas dudas me satisfaga Vuestra Reverencia, para que el gusto de esta *Historia* no se deshaga con la sospecha de no ser tan verdadera y cierta que se deba tener por historia” (55) [Given that without letters it does not seem possible that these long, elegant prayers are conserved and in their genre]. In this letter, Acosta demonstrates a widely held social anxiety of the moment regarding the reliability of non-written sources. Beyond this, however, Acosta’s inquiries into Tovar’s manuscript also indicate that Tovar acquired its contents from indigenous sources.

To assuage Acosta’s doubts regarding the reliability of these sources, Tovar writes to Acosta that, “[C]onsoléme tanto de que Vuestra Reverencia gustase tanto de esa *Historia*, que quise con más diligencia refrescar la memoria, comunicándome con unos Indios de *Tulla*, ancianos y principales, sabios en esto y muy ladinos de México y *Tezcuco*, con los cuales hice la *Historia* en esa forma” (57) [It consoles me so much that Your Reverence liked this *History* so much, that I tried to refresh the memory with more diligence, communicating with Indians from Tulla, ancients and principal [leaders], from Mexico and Tezcuco wise in this and very literate [in Spanish and Náhuatl], with whom I made the *History* in this form]. Tovar goes on to explain that,

El Virrey Don Martín Enríquez, teniendo deseo de saber estas antiguallas
de esta gente con certidumbre, mandó juntar las librerías que ellos tenían

the very ideology that Mignolo purports to describe” (65). Cañizares-Esguerra explains that, “The Sixteenth-century Spanish approach to indigenous scripts was somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand, most authors refused to grant Inca and Mesoamerican systems of writing the same authority as the Latin alphabet, which was considered ideal for transmitting historical data, because it did not depend on any oral exegesis. Yet these same authors did not hesitate to consider the historical information stored in quipus and codices as trustworthy” (68).

de estas cosas de México, *Tezcuco* y *Tulla*, se las trajeron, porque eran historiadores y sabios en estas cosas. Envióme el Virrey estos papeles y libros con el Doctor Portillo, provisor que fue de este Arzobispado, encargándome las viese y averiguase, haciendo alguna relación para enviar al Rey. Vi entonces toda esta historia con caracteres y jeroglíficos que yo no entendía, y así fue necesario que los sabios de México, *Tezcuco* y *Tulla* se viesen conmigo por mandado del mismo Virrey, y con ellos yéndome diciendo y narrando las cosas en particular, hice una *Historia* bien cumplida... (57-8)

The Viceroy Don Martín Enríquez, having [the] desire to know these antiquities of this people with certainty, he ordered to group together the libraries that they had about these things from Mexico, Tezcuco, and Tulla, they were brought together, because they were historians and wise in these things. The Viceroy sent me these papers and books with the Doctor Portillo, purveyor that was from this Archbishop, putting me in charge [so that] I saw and reviewed them, making some relation to send to the King. Then I saw the entire history with characters and hieroglyphs that I did not understand, and thus it was necessary that the wise ones from Mexico, Tezcuco, and Tulla meet with me at the command of the same Viceroy, and with them guiding me telling and narrating particular things, I made a well accomplished *History*.

As we see in the letters exchanged between Acosta and Tovar, the question of authority and veracity is central to the transmission and circulation of historiographical narratives from the New World, particularly those that depended on indigenous sources.

In a chapter titled “Interpretations of the Reliability of Indigenous Sources,” Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra takes a careful look at the philology, collation, and translation of sources in Acosta’s *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* (*How to Write the History of the New World* 70-88). He argues that sixteenth-century Spanish historians approached indigenous sources as reliable forms of historical memory. In this study, he concludes that Acosta was careful to consider the skepticism that some readers might have with regard to the polemical nature of the information that he was recording. Cañizares-Esguerra points out that,

To satisfy skeptics who argued that lengthy speeches allegedly delivered by ancient warriors and rulers were the invention of imaginative Spaniards, Acosta maintained that the Aztecs had created educational systems to ensure the fidelity of oral transmissions, and that songs were reliable alternative records developed by the Mexica to store historical information. (72)

Beyond the missionary extraction of native information from indigenous sources, the intertextual borrowing that we see between Acosta, Tovar, and Durán reveals yet another layer of exchange in the transmission of local information.

Amber Brian’s work on “the colonial economy of letters” in Mexico sheds significant insight into the way in which native knowledge circulated in larger intellectual

circles (*Alva Ixtlilxochitl's Native Archive and the Circulation of Knowledge in Colonial Mexico*). For example, in her study of Carlos de Sigüenza y Góngora's acquisition of Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxochitl's collection of native manuscripts, she finds that,

The exchanges I trace can be seen as emblematic of colonial Mexico's wider intellectual community. I call these kinds of interactions "the colonial economy of letters" in order to emphasize a mutuality of debt, benefit, and obligation that embraced everyone involved, rather than the one-way appropriation often attributed to figures like Sigüenza in their relationship to the indigenous past.¹⁶⁰ (10)

As Christian historians looked to engage with the "indigenous past," they depended on a two-pronged system to extract native knowledge: they relied on other European accounts as well as knowledgeable and wise "indios ladinos." We see this, for example, as Acosta draws from Tovar's work in Mexico City. This is also the case for Jesuit missionary work in Brazil, where Cardim depends on a local missionary (Anchieta) who had contact with indigenous sources, particularly in the field of medicine.¹⁶¹

¹⁶⁰ In her study of the circulation of native knowledge in colonial Mexico, Brian supports her observation on "the colonial economy of letters" with Ángel Rama's study *La ciudad letrada* (1984) and Rolena Adorno's article "La ciudad letrada y los discursos coloniales" (1987) to show that, "[t]he lettered city is founded on an exchange and dialogue between those who occupied the centers of power and those who existed at the margins" (8).

¹⁶¹ The "Tovar Manuscript" mentioned here is located at the John Carter Brown Library, Brown University (ms. no. 1586). The manuscript was first published as the *Historia de los yndios mexicanos* (1860). For more information on the "Tovar Manuscript," see Mangan's edition of Acosta's *Natural and Moral History* (9-10 n2). In this study, I use José J. Fuente de Pilar's edition of Tovar's *Historia y creencias de los indios de México*.

In both instances, Jesuit missionaries depended on indigenous informants in addition to their local, evangelical counterparts to compile their *relaciones* and *historias*. Despite their dependence on native knowledge, missionaries were also careful to position themselves as culturally superior to their indigenous informants. This colonial ambivalence—valuing indigenous knowledge while devaluing native peoples—points to the hierarchical chain of being that structured missionary thought by which the Jesuits understood themselves to be the gatekeepers of knowledge and spiritual authority. Moreover, as we also saw in the case of Cardim’s treatise on the land and people of Brazil, missionaries used this Eurocentric logic to justify evangelization and colonization via “spiritual conquest” on a global scale. In the following section, I highlight the impact of missionary networks of disease as they worked to convert pagan souls to Christianity in Anáhuac.

Missionary Intervention and the Spread of Disease in Anáhuac

In contrast with Brazil, Jesuit missionaries were not at the forefront of evangelization efforts in Anáhuac (present-day Mexico, Guatemala, and Nicaragua). In the initial phase of contact, it was the Franciscans that were the first to arrive on the scene. In 1524 the Franciscan Order sent the first twelve missionaries to Mexico—a symbolic numerical reference to the apostolic ministry of antiquity¹⁶²—and led the

¹⁶² Díaz Balsera makes this point in *The Pyramid Under the Cross*: “The drama of evangelization started as soon as the Twelve set foot in Veracruz. The number twelve, of course, carried all the evocative force of apostlehood that the Western imagination could muster. Just as the twelve apostles had gone into the world to preach the word of Christ,

charge via the implementation of a zealous campaign to baptize and convert native populations. Despite their late arrival (1572), Jesuit writings from Mexico also contribute to the documentation of an overwhelming correlate between Christian intervention and “disease episodes.”¹⁶³ In his chapter “Of the general nature of the earth in the Indies,” for example, Acosta takes note of the drastic demographic shifts experienced by Amerindian populations in New Spain and Peru and writes that, “En nuestro tiempo está tan disminuida y menoscabada la habitación de estas costas o llanos, que de treinta partes se deben de haber acabado las veinte y nueve; lo que dura de indios creen muchos se acabará antes de mucho” (140) [In our time the population of these coasts or plains is so much diminished and impaired that twenty-nine out of thirty of its inhabitants have disappeared; and many believe that the remaining Indians will disappear before long (143)]. The epidemiological history of the time corroborates Acosta’s assessment and it is estimated that, between 1519 and 1520, five to eight million people lost their lives to a

the newly arrived Franciscans had come into a new world in order to illuminate it with the holy word” (4).

¹⁶³ See Reff, *Plagues, Priests, and Demons*, 167-77. In his chapter “Disease and the Rise of Christianity in the New World,” Reff takes an in-depth look at the connection between Jesuit missions and the demographic impact on populations primarily in Northern Mexico in the seventeenth century. In addition to the initial waves of epidemics in the early stages of contact, Reff goes on to point out that: “The epidemic of 1593-1594 was the first of many epidemics described by the Jesuits that affected the Indians of northern Mexico. Jesuit reports mention or discuss epidemics of smallpox, measles, typhus, and other maladies that swept through the mission system at regular five to eight year intervals (e.g., 1593, 1601-1602, 1607-1608, 1611-1612, 1617, and 1623-1625). The temporal pattern reflects in part the appearance of a new generation of susceptible, particularly young children” (170). An analysis of “disease episodes” and baptism in New Spain reveals a correlate between social and biological shifts in Nahua population geographies due to religious conversion.

large-scale smallpox epidemic that broke out in the wake of Hernán Cortés's military campaign in the central valley of Mexico.¹⁶⁴

While the biological impact of Jesuit intervention in colonial Brazil was significant, European disease transmission to populations throughout the vast empires of Tawantinsuyu and Anáhuac was greater in sheer volume; this was largely due to well-paved trans-Amerindian socio-cultural exchange networks that connected Nahua and Maya populations with the Inca and other groups throughout Central and South America. In the case of central Mexico, Spanish conquistadors arrived in Tlaxcala on 11 July 1520 and the last Mexica emperor, Cuauhtémoc, did not officially surrender until 13 August 1521. Despite their attempts to maintain control over the region, the triple alliance of native the city-states of Tenochtitlán, Texcoco, and Tlacopan was still a recent conglomerate in the early sixteenth century and did not prove to be a stronghold as the Mexica battled the Spanish.¹⁶⁵ Weak alliances, or lack thereof, among groups of central Mexico were further debilitated by the biological impact of *cocoliztli*, Náhuatl for pest, which, in this particular context, is most likely a reference to three cataclysmic smallpox

¹⁶⁴ See Rodolfo Acuna-Soto, David W. Stahle, Malcolm K. Cleaveland, and Matthew D. Therrell, "Megadrought and Megadeath in 16th Century Mexico," 360.

¹⁶⁵ Constructed by an anonymous indigenous hand, the Codex Mendoza map of Tenochtitlán (c. 1542) provides important insight into the way in which natives to the region conceptualized their particular sense of space and place even after the new colonial order began to take root in New Spain. Tenochtitlán based on the Codex Mendoza map; Mexica controlled *altepetl* of Tenochtitlán-Tlatelolco, the capital city-state of the larger region known as Culhua-Mexica (founded in 1325 CE). The amalgamation of city-state poles through these forms of paired toponyms represents the complex kinship networks that operated along dynamic shifts in tributary alignments as various Nahua groups competed for control over natural resources and human subjects. In the Mexica-dominated structure centered on the triple alliance between Tenochtitlán, Texcoco, and Tlacopan, human subjects were a significant source of labor as well as the sacrificial blood required by Huitzilopochtli.

epidemics that ravished Mesoamerica in 1519-1520, 1545, and 1576.¹⁶⁶ With the installation of the first Viceroy in 1535 came additional waves of Franciscan and Dominican orders, followed by the Jesuit missionary campaign beginning in 1572. Just as we saw in the case of colonial Brazil, it is through missionary baptisms *en masse* that Christian contact with native populations allowed for deadly contagions to be passed from Europeans to Amerindians, a phenomenon that characterizes colonial missionary encounters throughout the Americas.

Acosta, in his effort to explain such a rapid and drastic population decline, finds that: “Atribuyen esto diversos a diversas causas, unos a demasiado trabajo que han dado a los indios, otros al diverso modo de mantenimientos y bebidas que usan después que participan el uso de españoles; otros al demasiado vicio que en beber y en otros abusos tienen” (140) [People attribute this to various causes, some to the fact that the Indians have been overworked, others to the changes of food and drink that they adopted after becoming accustomed to Spanish habits, and others to the excessive vice that they display in drink and other abuses (143-44)]. Acosta’s assessment of high indigenous death rates linked to their propensity to “excessive vice” or sin is related to Christian views on the role of divine intervention in health and sickness. By this logic, Acosta argues that epidemic disease was a product of Amerindian “moral degeneration.”

This assertion echoes the same missionary logic that we find in colonial Brazil whereby missionaries reasoned that death and disease served as a form of spiritual

¹⁶⁶ See Rodolfo Acuna-Soto, David W. Stahle, Malcolm K. Cleaveland, and Matthew D. Therrell, “Megadrought and Megadeath in 16th Century Mexico,” 360.

salvation, given the propensity of the “Indian” soul to regress to “gentile” customs.¹⁶⁷

What becomes clear through the juxtaposition of the case studies of missionary writings in Brazil and Mexico is that Jesuits understood native demographic devastation in the Americas as the ultimate act of spiritual salvation, a gift from God, in an effort to mitigate the persistence of “idolatrous” practice among new converts. As we saw in Brazil, not only did missionaries equate native deaths to a spiritual imbalance (i.e. moral degeneration) but Tupi and Tapuia populations also equated death and disease to a spiritual imbalance in their relationship with their gods. As we turn to Mexico, we find that, amidst social crisis and unrest, Nahua groups also worked to understand an unprecedented amount of death and destruction within a spiritual frame of their own.

We get a glimpse of what this logic might have been at the time of contact via Acosta’s chapter “Of the Spaniards Entry into Mexico” in which Acosta promises to write “lo que los indios refieren de este caso, que no anda en letras españolas hasta el presente” (409) [to tell what the Indians recount of the matter, which has not been published in Spanish until now (436)]. He recounts Moctezuma’s attempts to halt Christian efforts at conquest in Mexico, “por medio de hechiceros y encantadores” [by using sorcerers and enchanterers], and he reports that, “Fueron una cuadrilla grandísima de estos oficiales diabólicos, al camino de Chalco, que era por donde venían los españoles” (410) [A very large group of these diabolical officers went to the Chalco road, which was the one on which the Spaniards were coming (436)]. Acosta goes on to describe the conversation that this group of “necromancers and sorcerers” had with their god,

¹⁶⁷ For a discussion of this same phenomenon in colonial Brazil, see Chapter One.

Tezcatlipoca, on the top of a nearby hill in which *Tezcatlipoca* came to them angrily, “fuera de sí, como hombre embriagado de coraje y rabia” (410) [beside himself and like a man drunk with passion and fury (436)].

Purportedly, *Tezcatlipoca* asked them: “¿Para qué volvéis vosotros acá? ¿qué pretende Motezuma por vuestro medio? Tarde ha acordado, que ya está determinado que le quiten su reino, y su honra y cuanto tiene, por las grandes tiranías grandes que ha cometido contra sus vasallos...” (410) [Why do you come here? What is Moctezuma trying to do with your aid? Too late has he made his decision; it is ordained that his kingdom and his honor and everything he possesses will be taken from him because of great acts of tyranny that he has committed against his vassals... (436)]. Acosta concludes this scene as he writes that, “Dicen que volvieron a mirar a México [los oficiales diabólicos], y que la vieron arder y abrasarse toda en vivas llamas. Con esto el demonio desapareció, y ellos, no osando pasar adelante, dieron noticia a Motezuma...” (410) [It is said that they [the diabolical officers] turned back to look at Mexico and that they saw the city burning and wholly consumed in living flames. Upon this the demon disappeared, and not daring to take another step, they sent word to Moctezuma (437)]. According to Acosta’s representations of this dialogue between the “group of diabolical officers” and *Tezcatlipoca*, Nahua healers and spiritual leaders may have attributed the death and destruction that they experienced to Moctezuma’s failure to maintain Mexica control in the face of the Cortés’ military campaign. According to Acosta, Moctezuma reasoned that, “los dioses y nuestros amigos no nos favorecen” (410) [our gods and our friends do not favor us (437)]. Of course, this account is filtered through a Christianized

version of the story and scholars differ on their assessment of native-held perspectives regarding Moctezuma's role in Cortés's military victory over Mexico-Tenochtitlán in 1521.¹⁶⁸ Nonetheless, the dialogue points to disequilibrium in Nahua society at large, which Acosta portrays in his depiction of *Tezcatlipoca* as "beside himself and like a man drunk with passion and fury."

After 1521—with their main temple in ruins, bouts of epidemic disease rattling the expanse of what was once the Mexica Empire, and devastating loss and social change—, many natives decided to flee to more remote areas in the region in search of relief. Acosta, aware of these population movements, observes that:

De indios hay por todas las serranías grande habitación, y hoy día se sustentan y aun quieren decir que van en crecimiento los indios, salvo que la labor de minas gasta muchos, y algunas enfermedades generales han consumido gran parte, como el cocoliste en la Nueva España, pero en efecto de parte de su vivienda no se ve que vaya en disminución. (141)

There is a large Indian population in all the mountain regions; they maintain their numbers today, and some even say that the Indians are increasing, except that work in the mines kills many of them, and some common diseases (such as the fever called *cocoliste* in New Spain) have

¹⁶⁸ Records from the initial phases of contact (just after 1521) are scarce. Thus present-day readings of colonial documents (picking up production in the mid-sixteenth century) problematize (biased) European representations of the encounter. For example, Camilla Townsend ("Burying the White Gods") debunks the myth that Nahua peoples conflated the arrival of Cortés with the (anticipated) return of their plumed serpent god, *Quetzalcoátl*. She points to a series of mistranslations by Spanish conquistadors, as they worked to transcode Nahuátl words to Spanish, as they wrote convincing arguments for their own merit in the conquest (worthy of royal recognition).

caused many deaths; but in fact it does not seem that their numbers are decreasing. (144)

Acosta's observation that they seem to maintain their numbers might have more to do with mounting groups of resistance to missionary intervention rather than indicative of resistance to *cocoliste* itself—a term in Náhuatl adapted to represent the eruption of smallpox in colonial New Spain¹⁶⁹—, which traveled biological circuits beyond the scope of the missionaries. In addition, as Acosta notes, *cocoliste* was one of the “common diseases” that afflicted native populations at the time, even in some of the more remote regions.

Of these types of resistance movements, Acosta singles out the Chichimecas as some of the most “barbarous” and “uncivilized” Amerindians in the region. He refers to them as “the ancient dwellers in New Spain,” and he writes that they were “hombres muy bárbaros y silvestres, que sólo se mantenían de caza” (358) [very savage forest-dwelling men who lived solely from hunting (380)]. Acosta, disgusted by the oppositional strategy that these forms of seminomadic migration patterns afforded native “forest-dwelling men,” goes on to complain that these people:

[S]e acaudillan y juntan, y no han podido los españoles, por bien ni mal, por maña ni fuerza, reducirlos a policía y obediencia, porque como no tienen pueblos ni asiento, el pelear con éstos es puramente montear fieras, que se esparcen y esconden por lo más áspero y encubierto de la sierra.

(359)

¹⁶⁹ See Gary Clayton Anderson, *The Indian Southwest*, 108.

Band together to do evil and launch attacks; and the Spaniards have been unable to reduce them to civilized behavior and obedience either by fair means or foul, by wiles or force. For, because they have neither towns nor fixed abodes, fighting with them is exactly like hunting beasts, for they scatter and hide in the roughest and most thickly wooded parts of the mountains. (381)

Acosta argues that this continues to be true throughout different parts of the Indies (*Historia natural y moral* 358-59); in fact, he asserts that, “Y de este género de indios bárbaros, principalmente se trata en los libros *De Procuranda Indorum Salute*, cuando se dice que tienen la necesidad de ser compelidos y sujetados con alguna honesta fuerza, y que es necesario enseñallos a ser hombres, y después a ser Cristianos” (359) [it is this kind of wild Indians that the books *De procuranda Indorum salute* treat when it is stated that they must be compelled and tamed with reasonable force and that they must first be taught to be men and then to be Christians (381)]. In these cases, the Company of Jesus worked to settle these populations to missions in order to “civilize” and Christianize indigenous populations, who often banded together in remote areas that provided protection against missionary attempts at evangelization.

As we have seen in previous chapters, indigenous resistance was often in response to the unrelenting connection between missionary contact and the spread of sickness and death. While some indigenous populations in the mountain regions of Mexico continued to resist reduction to missionary settlements, Acosta points out that, “[d]onde se pone la cruz y hay iglesias, y se confiesa e nombre de Cristo, no osa chistar el demonio, y han

cesado sus pláticas y oráculos, y respuestas y apariencias visibles, que tan ordinarias eran en toda su infidelidad” (420) [where the cross is planted and there are churches and the name of Christ is confessed, the devil dares not make a sound, and his speeches and oracles and replies and apparitions, which were so common everywhere in his heathen lands, have ceased (448)]. He goes on to write that even “[l]os ministros de Satanás, indios hechiceros y magos, lo han confesado y no se puede negar” [the ministers of Satan themselves, the Indian sorcerers and magicians, have confessed it and it cannot be denied], though he does admit that “[s]i algún maldito ministro suyo participa hoy algo de esto, es allá en las cuevas o cimas o lugares escondidísimos y del todo remotos del nombre y trato de cristianos” (420) [if some accused minister of his takes part in any of this today he does so in caves or on mountaintops or in very hidden places, entirely remote from the name and practice of Christians (448)].

Reff (*Plagues, Priests, and Demons*) points out that, just as was true with the rise of Christianity in Europe, successful conversion was often “coincident with a population collapse”:

Comparison of population figures given by Spanish explorers (before the introduction of disease) with Jesuit baptismal and census data suggest that native populations in northern Mexico were reduced 30 to 50 percent prior to sustained contact with the Jesuits. Within a few decades of incorporation into the mission system, native populations were reduced by 75 percent or more. (173)

In this study, Reff focuses primarily on the case of seventeenth-century northern Mexico, though his analysis also lines up with Acosta's observations on the link between the spread of Christianity and the decline of native populations in the sixteenth century. Reff has also pointed out that natives who suffered epidemic outbreaks in Mexico were likely to ask to be baptized by Christian missionaries with the belief that the purification rite had the power to heal via divine intervention.

In these encounters, purification rites on both sides of the divide served as important cures for sickness and disease. As we have seen, as missionaries worked to baptize native populations by the thousands, they functioned as a major catalyst in the spread of disease among natives susceptible to European-born pathogens. For the newly formed Nahua-Christian subject, similar purification/healing rites already existed within Nahua spiritual traditions, which perhaps factored into a certain level of willingness on the part of Nahua peoples to participate in Christian baptism rituals.¹⁷⁰ For example, the indigenous festival dedicated to *Quetzalcoatl* (the *Neyolo Maxitl Ileztl*) is an important rite, which served as a ceremony for purification in the interest of health-related matters. To explain the religious similarities between Christianity and pagan practices in the Americas, Acosta discusses, “cómo el demonio ha procurado asemejarse a Dios en el modo de sacrificios, y religion y sacramentos” (263) [how the devil has tried to copy God in methods of sacrifices and of religion and sacraments (275)]. Acosta argues that “procura el demonio imitarlo y pervertirlo” [the devil strives to imitate and pervert [them] (275)]. As Acosta observes indigenous rites and ceremonies, he sees some of the same

¹⁷⁰ See Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth*, 87-129.

religious fervor in Nahua practitioners that he knows to be true of his Christian counterparts, though he classifies pagan religious traditions as a devilish “perversion” of Christianity.

This logic—to explain away religious similarities as perversions of the Devil—echoes throughout Jesuit writings in the early modern period, as missionaries tried to make sense of alternative religious frameworks that often mirrored their own. Missionaries often documented these “perversions” (i.e. pagan religious rites) as “superstitious,” while they understood their own rituals as proper religion. In summary of native traditions, Acosta observes that,

Y así hacían en el vulgo mil supersticiones en el modo de ofrecer incienso, y en la manera de cortarles el cabello, y en atarles palillos a los cuellos e hilos con huesezuelos de culebras, que se bañasen a tal y tal hora, que velasen de noche a un fogón, y que no comiesen otra cosa de pan, sino lo que había sido ofrecido a sus dioses, y luego acudiesen a los sortilegos, que con ciertos granos echaban suertes y adivinaban mirando en lebrillos y cercas de agua. (295)

And so they created innumerable superstitions in the common folk in the way of offering incense, in the way of cutting their hair, and in tying little sticks around their necks and strings of snakes’ bones, telling them to bathe at such and such hour, to stay up all night beside a hearth, and not to eat any other kind of food than that which had been offered to the gods; and then they made them come and witness their witchcraft, for they told

fortunes with certain grains and made divinations by looking into pans and pools of water. (310)

The binary that Acosta constructs between the absolute truth that he identifies with his own God and the perversions of “Satanic” sects in the Americas reflects the spiritual politics of Nahua-Christian ritual encounters as they relate to indigenous plants, practices, and practitioners, who “made [the Indians] come and witness their witchcraft.”

As was true in missionary intervention in Brazil, Acosta depends on the same Jesuit discourse of “sorcery” or “witchcraft” to demonize Amerindian healers and spiritual leaders that operated in opposition to their “spiritual conquest.” As I have demonstrated, the spread of European disease among susceptible native populations in colonial Mexico further complicated cross-cultural medical encounters. To unpack the implications of religion, medicine, and authority in these encounters, we can turn to Acosta’s representations of traditional plant use in colonial Mexico. In doing so, it becomes evident that these cross-cultural interactions represent significant sites in the battle for power and medical knowledge in Nahua-Christian spiritual encounters. In the following section, I turn a critical eye to Acosta’s representations of native plant use in colonial Mexico to assess his demonization and appropriation of indigenous medical knowledge via his defense of Jesuit spiritual authority in the Americas.

The Role of Plants in Nahua-Christian Ritual Encounters

In my analysis of Acosta’s representations of native plant use in colonial Mexico, I examine the way in which Acosta symbolically resituates local medical knowledge and

authority, as he demonized and/or Christianized ritual plant use via the philosophical and theological parameters that informed his natural and moral history.¹⁷¹ While Acosta does not provide many detailed entries on local pharmacopeia in New Spain—their cultivation, appearance, along with preparation and dosage—he does take care to outline certain plants and their uses to highlight the abundance of these products for European consumption and colonial exploitation. For a more exhaustive account of American medicines, he refers his readers to more prolific pharmacological records compiled by Nicolás Monardes and Francisco Hernández.¹⁷² Acosta points out that,

De esta materia de plantas de Indias, y de licores y otras cosas medicinales, hizo una insigne obra el doctor Francisco Hernández, por especial comisión de su Majestad, haciendo pintar al natural de todas las plantas de Indias, que según dicen pasan de mil doscientas, y afirman haber costado esta obra más de sesenta mil ducados, de la cual hizo uno como extracto el doctor Nardo Antonio, médico italiano, con gran curiosidad. A los dichos libros y obras remito al que más por menudo y

¹⁷¹ Mignolo makes this point in his critical introduction to Mangan's edition of Acosta's *Natural and Moral History of the Indies* and elaborates that, "Not a minor fact of these sixteenth-century historical transformations was the approach to the concept of knowledge and understanding that Acosta addressed, head on, in his initial chapters. His concept of moral and natural aspects of history represented at the intersection of philosophy and theology: philosophy because understanding nature, for Acosta, was not just a question of describing minerals, plants, and animals, but of understanding the order of the universe and the chain of being, of which the human being was the point of arrival of God's creation; and theology because understanding nature was a way of knowing and revering God, its creator" (xviii).

¹⁷² Monardes published his *Historia medicinal* based on New World plants in 1565 and Francisco Hernández, as Acosta notes, was a sixteenth-century royal physician in king Phillip II's court and published extensively on Mexican plants and medicines.

con perfección quisiere saber de plantas de Indias mayormente para efectos de medicina. (214-15)

Doctor Francisco Hernández, expressly commissioned by His Majesty, wrote a remarkable book about this subject of plants of the Indies and liquors and other medicinal things. He made paintings from life of the plants of the Indies, of which it is said there are more than twelve hundred, and they say that this work costs more than sixty thousand ducats. A sort of extract of this book was made with rare scientific zeal by Doctor Nardo Antonio, an Italian physician. I recommend these books and works to any of my readers who may wish to know in more detail, and more perfectly, about the plants of the Indies, especially for medicinal purposes. (223)

Although *materia medica* is not Acosta's focus in New Spain since Monardes and Hernández had already produced significant treatises on the matter, Acosta does give a general overview of the abundance of local pharmacopeia that colonists and missionaries can expect to find.

As I have shown throughout this study, in addition to their use-value within colonial settlements, these items had potential for profit within the larger Atlantic marketplace and, in his chapter "Of liquidambar and other oils and gums and drugs that are brought from the Indies" Acosta highlights the natural abundance of Mexico:

Viene también el liquidámba de la Nueva España, y es sin duda aventajada aquella provincia en estas gomas o licores o jugos de árboles, y

así tienen copia de diversas materias para perfumes y para medicinas, como es el ánimo, que viene en grande cantidad, el copal y el suchicopal, que es otro género como de estoraque y encienso, que también tiene excelentes operaciones y muy lindo olor para sahumerios. También la tacamahaca y la caraña, que son muy medicinales. El aceite que llaman de abeto también de allá lo traen, y médicos y pintores se aprovechan asaz de él, los unos para sus emplastos y los otros para barniz de sus imágenes. (213)

Liquidambar also comes from New Spain, and there is no doubt that the province has the advantage in these gums or liquids or sap of trees, and so they have large amounts of different materials for perfumes and medicines, such as *anime*, which occurs in large quantities, and *copal* and *suchicopal*, which is another sort resembling balm or incense, also possessing excellent qualities and a very fine smell for censuring. There are also *tacamahaca* and *caraña*, which are very medicinal. The oil called *abeto* also comes from there, and doctors and painters make considerable use of it, the former for poultices and the latter for varnish for their pictures. (222)

Acosta also finds that, “Otros innumerables palos aromáticos y gomas, y aceites y drogas, hay en Indias, que ni es posible referirlas todas...” [There is such an enormous number in the Indies of aromatic woods and gums and oils and drugs that it is impossible to list them all (223)]. The “large quantities” and the “considerable use” that Acosta highlights

in these “different materials for perfumes and medicine” signal that American *materia medica* figured prominently on European markets.

In his evaluation of medical abundance in central Mexico, Acosta points out that, “[h]ubo grandes hombres de curar con simples, y hacían curas aventajadas, por tener conocimiento de diversas virtudes y propiedades de yerbas, raíces, y palos y plantas, que allá se dan, de que ninguna noticia tuvieron los antiguos de Europa” (214) [there were many famous men who cured with simples and performed excellent cures because they had knowledge of the different virtues and the properties of the herbs and roots and woods and plants that grow there, about which the ancients in Europe knew nothing (223)]. In his investigation of Nahua knowledge of the natural world, Acosta finds that:

Y para purgar hay mil cosas de estas simples, como raíz de Mechoacán, piñones de la Puna y conserva de Guanuco, y aceite de higuera y otras cien cosas, que bien aplicadas y a tiempo no las tiene por de menor eficacia que las drogas que vienen de Oriente, como podrá entender el que leyere lo que Monardes ha escrito en la primera y segunda parte, el cual también trata largamente del tabaco del cual han hecho notables experiencias contra veneno. (214)

Any number of these simples are used for purges, such as Michoacán root, pine nuts from Puna, preserves from Guanaco, oil of figs, and a hundred other things, which, if well applied and at the appropriate time, are no less efficacious than the drugs that come from the East, which anyone can appreciate who reads what Monardes has written in the first and second

parts of his book; it also deals at length with tobacco, which has been used with remarkable success against poison. (211)

Given the natives' "knowledge of the different virtues and the prosperities of herbs and roots and woods and plants that grow there," missionaries carefully observed the local rites and customs that embodied this type of information. This does not imply, however, that missionaries always liked what they saw.

The positive estimation of Nahua healers and their knowledge of the natural world ("about which the ancients in Europe knew nothing") that Acosta presents here is a striking contrast with his account of the use of an "abominable" ointment that he associates with "sorcery" among Nahua groups in Mexico. In his chapter on "the abominable unction used by the Mexican priests and those of other nations and of their sorcerers," Acosta demonizes the *ololuchqui* plant and signals his disdain for its contribution to the heightened social power it afforded Nahua healers and spiritual leaders:

También servía este betún para curar los enfermos y niños, por lo cual le llamaban todos medicina divina, y así acudían de todas partes a las dignidades y sacerdotes como a saludadores, para que les aplicasen la medicina divina, y ellos les untaban con ella las partes enfermas, y afirman que sentían con ella notable alivio, y debía esto de ser, porque el tabaco y el *ololuchqui* tienen gran virtud de amortiguar, y aplicado por vía del emplasto, amortigua las carnes esto solo por sí, cuanto más con tanto género de ponzoñas, y como les amortiguaba el dolor, parecíales efecto de

sanidad y virtud divina, acudiendo a estos sacerdotes como a hombres santos, los cuales traían engañados y embaucados los ignorantes, persuadiéndoles cuanto querían, haciéndoles acudir a sus medicinas y ceremonias diabólicas, porque tenían tanta autoridad, que bastaba decirles ellos cualquiera cosa, para tenerla por artículo de fe. (295)

This ointment also served to cure the sick, and children, and so everyone called it divine medicine, and folk came from everywhere to the temple dignitaries and priests as to saviors, to have them apply it; and they anointed the ailing parts with it and said that it gave them great relief. And this must have been true, for tobacco and *ololuchqui* have great power to relieve pain, and if applied as plaster would of themselves deaden the flesh, all the more so because so many different poisons were used. And since it relieved pain they thought it was the effect of a cure and of divine virtue. Thus they ran to those priests as to holy men, who kept the ignorant tricked and deceived, convincing them of whatever they liked and making them come to their medicines and diabolical ceremonies. Because they possessed so much authority, the priests had only to say anything whatsoever to the people to have it taken as an article of faith. (309-10)

Acosta demonizes this unction made of *ololuchqui*—a plant whose flower produced hallucinogenic seeds—because of its role in ritual healing. However, Acosta does

recognize its practical application (along with tobacco) to relieve pain.¹⁷³ In its ritual capacity, the hallucinogen was ingested by the priest and functioned to summon divine power, most likely that of *Ixtlilton*, the Nahua deity of medicine.¹⁷⁴

Guillermo Bonfil Batalla's *México Profundo: Reclaiming a Civilization* provides significant insight regarding the conceptualization of native medicine. While his remarks reflect present-day indigenous practices in Mexico, they also illuminate historic Mesoamerican medical practices and beliefs.

In Indian cultures, many illnesses are explained by the intervention of superior forces. These forces act to punish conduct considered unacceptable because it constitutes a transgression of norms ensuring harmony between human beings and between humans and the universe. Thus treatment may include propitiatory ceremonies and rites prescribed by tradition. (34)

Bonfil Batalla defines this approach as a “multiple therapy” that addresses both the physical and spiritual equilibrium of the patient. In this sense, the cultural rites and traditions that accompany the administration of medicine form an integral part of the overall healing technique. Following this logic, Bonfil Batalla concludes that, “Human conduct conditions health; the knowledge of the curative properties of plants forms part of the total conception of nature and is expressed with corresponding symbolism. What

¹⁷³ See Albert Hofmann and Richard Evans Schultes (*Plants of the Gods: Origins of Hallucinogenic Use*), in which the authors demonstrate that this plant has several different species in Mexico. However, “all species of *Datura (ololuchqui)* are chemically similar, having as their active principles tropane alkaloids, especially atropine, hyoscyamine, and scopolamine” (41).

¹⁷⁴ See Clavijero, *Historia antigua de México*, 221.

we call religion and what we call medicine are intertwined in many ways, so the distinction is erased” (35).

In her evaluation of the Nahua ritual scene, Louise M. Burkhart’s work in *The Slippery Earth: Nahua-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* compares and contrasts Nahua and Christian cosmologies to discuss Nahua concepts of morality and equilibrium. According to Burkhart the difference between the two belief systems had to do with the fact that,

Indigenous morality had a this-worldly rather than an other-worldly focus; its justification lay in the nature of life on earth rather than the pronouncements of a distant deity. It articulated not with a Christian worldview but with basic pan-Mesoamerican religious concepts; a cosmos in delicate balance, the 260-day calendar or *tonalpohualli*; capricious deities, and penitence aimed at earning favor rather than forgiveness for sins. (28)

Pete Sigal’s study on sexuality and ritual in early Nahua culture also provides important insight on the matter, and he observes that in Nahua culture, “[t]he human body always maintained a very close connection to both the natural world and the world of the gods” and goes on to argue that, “a Nahua could not view the human body in isolation from the existence of the gods or from the centrality of plants, animals, and earth. And humans could also alter their bodies, though only in ritually appropriate ways, and only with the support of the gods” (*The Flower and the Scorpion* 4). As Bonfil Batalla’s, Burkhart’s,

and Sigal's studies suggest, there is a sacred link between Nahua bodies, plants, and the gods.

Acosta's account of *ololuchqui* evinces this intricate web between religion and medicine, although for the Jesuit missionary, it is precisely within these connections that the satanic source of indigenous medicine resides. In his description of the native ritual use of the plant, Acosta writes that, "Con esta unción se volvían brujos, y veían y hablaban con el demonio" (295) [By applying this ointment they became sorcerers [witches] and saw and spoke with the devil (309)]. As religion and medicine intersect in colonial Mexico, Nahua-Christian spiritual encounters in New Spain demonstrate that ritual plant use is particularly complex, which provides insight into Jesuit spiritual politics over medicinal plants. Jesuit missionaries merged their natural (scientific) and moral (religious) history in their evaluation of controversial plants, given the intimate ties between the natural world and the gods within the Mesoamerican tradition.¹⁷⁵ Based on

¹⁷⁵ In the introduction to their anthology *El saber de los jesuitas, historias naturales y el Nuevo Mundo*, in which they contend that: "Un punto de contacto entre los jesuitas y el mundo natural que resultó problemático fue el hecho de que para las sociedades americanas la naturaleza formaba parte de su universo religioso. Concepciones como éstas entraban en contradicción con los fines evangélicos de los jesuitas y su determinación de someter a los nativos del Nuevo Mundo bajo la concepción religiosa de poder metropolitano" (19) [A point of contact between the Jesuits and the natural world that ended up as problematic was the fact that, for American societies, nature formed part of their religious universe. These types of conceptions contradicted the evangelical ends of the Jesuits and their determination to submit New World natives to the religious conception of the metropolitan power (my translation)]. In her research on *Sueño y alucinación en el mundo náhuatl y maya* [*Dream and Hallucination in the Náhuatl and Mayan World*], Mercedes de la Garza also argues that the Christian problem with American nature is related to the fact that, "[r]esiden para el indígena deidades que pasan a integrarse al hombre que los ingiere, sacralizándose y dotándolo de poderes sobrehumanos para vincularse con los dioses y penetrar en los espacios sagrados" [for the indigenous, deities that come to integrate themselves with the man that ingest them

its sacred function in native rituals, the ability of *ololuchqui* to link humans to sacred deities via psychotropic channels represents a dangerous portal for “satanic” intervention, from the perspective of the Jesuits.

Jesuit missionaries recognized both the sacred and social power that this type of plant use provided Nahua ritual specialists to connect to “demonic” sources and actively sought to eradicate these practices to eliminate any spiritual opposition or alternatives. Acosta, for example, complains that, “[a]cudiendo a estos sacerdotes como a hombres santos... porque tenían tanta autoridad, que bastaba decirles ellos cualquiera cosa, para tenerla por artículo de fe” (295) [Thus they ran to those priests as to holy men... Because they possessed so much authority, the priests had only to say anything whatsoever to the people to have it taken as an article of faith (309)]. Acosta’s complaints against “sorcerers” in central Mexico “because they possessed so much authority” echo those made by missionaries in Brazil, and we find that native healers and spiritual leaders across the Americas provided some of the greatest opposition to evangelization, given their specialized roles among indigenous people to provide physical and spiritual wellbeing for their communities.

Jesuit missionaries, in turn, used a discourse of sorcery to categorize certain native healers and spiritual leaders as diabolical in order to justify their opposition to them as they simultaneously appropriate their power and knowledge to heal potential converts. In his chapter “Disease and the Rise of Christianity in the New World,” Reff highlights the polemical position that “sorcerers” held for missionaries and he finds that,

[psychotropic seeds], making himself sacred and bestowing him with superhuman powers to link himself with the gods and to penetrate sacred spaces] (18).

Although the *hechicero*'s or shamans' particular "arts" and knowledge were rarely discussed by the Jesuits, the latter spoke at great length of their power and influence over fellow Indians. Some *hechiceros* were solicited to deal with a variety of personal misfortunes, for which they received payments of food or other material items. The calamity most often mentioned by the Jesuits was sickness, which some shamans reportedly treated using sleight of hand, curing by blowing and sucking, and other forms of sympathetic magic. (*Plagues, Priests, Demons* 153)

In the case of *ololuchqui* that Acosta presents to his readers—contrary to the general *modus operandi* of Jesuit discourse—he gives a detailed description of how the unction is made in addition to specifics regarding its ritual use. As we have seen, when Acosta dabbles in representations of the dark arts as he does here, it is in the interest of "good philosophy" and "excellent theology." As Reff notes, perhaps of greatest concern to Christian missionaries was the power and authority that native medicine people attained through the rite, hence Acosta's justification for the detailed description that he provides so that this "devilish" plant use could be recognized and eradicated.

Andres I. Prieto's work on missionary scientists also highlights the resistance that native healers and spiritual leaders posed as missionaries worked to usurp the spiritual power and medical authority in Spanish South America. In his chapter "Confessing the Power to Heal," Prieto analyzes the symbolic significance of indigenous healers and spiritual leaders for missionaries and points out that:

The wide range of functions fulfilled by the shamans in native communities—particularly the superposition of spiritual and medicinal roles—inevitably led to confrontations over authority and jurisdiction between them and the Jesuit missionaries. Since shamans drew their authority and prestige mainly from their ability as healers, the missionaries were forced to assume the role of medicine men in the missions if they were to displace them as spiritual leaders. Under these circumstances, the knowledge of the medicinal uses of local flora was of paramount importance for the missionaries. (*Missionary Scientists* 41)

As Prieto's study suggests, for missionaries, the authority and prestige that native healers and spiritual leaders maintained throughout the colonial period were a hindrance to their evangelization goals. What is at stake here, then, is the religious authority of the native healers who cure through the divine intervention of non-Christian deities. Control over plant use was important for missionaries and, just as was true in the case of Brazil, Nahua-Christian encounters often centered on the authority to administer plant-based medicine, given the urgent need to care for the sick and dying. European intervention in the region threatened traditional ways of life in Anáhuac, in large part due to the unprecedented spread of never-before-seen disease among native populations.

While some plants proved polemical based on their ritual use (such as *ololuchqui*), not all ritually significant plants in the native repertoire pose the same set of problems in Acosta's evaluation of nature in colonial Mexico. The question then arises as to why some medicinal plants are Christianized and appropriated while other plants are

not. For example, chicha and tobacco also play a central role in ritual cures performed by indigenous healers and spiritual leaders. But, despite the cultural significance of these plant products within indigenous religious structures, Acosta overlooks this and finds that, “[u]san los indios más pulidos, y algunos españoles, por medicina; porque en efecto, hallan que para riñones y urina es muy saludable bebida, por donde apenas se halla en indios semejante mal, por el uso de beber chicha” (192) [the more scrupulous Indians and some Spaniards use this [chicha] as medicine, for in fact they find that it is a very healthful drink for the kidneys and urine, and hence such ailments are rarely found among the Indians owing to their habit of drinking chicha (199)]. Perhaps even more revealing is Acosta’s observation that both “Indians and some Spaniards use this medicine,” which provides insight into the way in which Amerindian medicine was also valued by Europeans. Ostensibly, Europeans denigrated American plants and people as inferior as they simultaneously depended on them for their own health and wellness in colonial settlements.

As Acosta’s positive (or at least devoid of demonizing rhetoric) evaluation of chicha and tobacco demonstrates, Acosta did find many acceptable plants in colonial Mexico, where he observes that,

Y aunque todo es medicinal en las plantas, bien sabido y bien aplicado, pero algunas cosas hay que notoriamente muestran haberse ordenado por su Creador para medicina y salud de los hombres, como son licores, o aceites o gomas, o resinas, que echan diversas plantas, que con fácil experiencia dicen luego para qué son buenas. (211)

And, although everything in plants is medicinal if thoroughly known and well applied, there are some things that appear to have been ordained by their Creator most particularly for medicine and for the health of men, such as the liquors or oils or gums or resins produced by different plants, and it is easy to discover why they are good. (220)

Of these particularly important medicines “for the health of men,” Acosta goes on to say that, “Entre éstas, el bálsamo es celebrado con razón por su excelente olor, y mucho más extremado efecto de sanar heridas, y otros diversos remedios para enfermedades, que en él se experimentan” (211-12) [Among these plants balsam is rightly praised for its excellent odor and still more for its ability to cure wounds and some other remedies for illnesses that have been found in it (220)].

Acosta finds that the balsam from the Old World is similar to that of the New World, despite the fact that the balsam from the West Indies is not the “true balsam,” inherited by Western Europe from the East in ancient times:

No es bálsamo que va de Indias Occidentales de la misma especie que el verdadero bálsamo que traen de Alejandría o del Cairo, y que antiguamente hubo en Judea, la cual sola en el mundo según Plinio escribe, poseyó esta grandeza, hasta que los emperadores Vespasianos la trajeron a Roma e Italia. (212)

Balsam from the West Indies is not of the same kind as the true balsam that is brought from Alexandria or Cairo and that in ancient times existed in Judea, which was the only place in the world, as Pliny writes, that

possessed this great boon until the Vespasian emperors brought it to Rome and Italy. (220)

As Acosta compares and contrasts the value of Old World and New World balsam, we find a clearly defined geographic narrative of colonial difference that characterizes Jesuit missionary writings at large. The “true” balsam is located in the Old World “from Alexandria or Cairo and that in ancient times existed in Judea.”

In his estimation of ancient/Edenic medicine, just as was true of Cardim in Brazil, Acosta serves as a striking example of missionary correspondence caught between Greco-Roman models of thought from antiquity—revamped by humanists of the early modern period—and firsthand experiences from the New World, which reconfigured previously held notions of the earth, the cosmos, and global history. In his evaluation of the different types of balsam in the old world and the new, Acosta perpetuates the geographic and religious values that he ascribes to New World plants and people as he writes,

Muéveme a decir que no es de la misma especie el un licor y el otro, ver que los arboles de donde mana, son entre sí muy diversos, porque el árbol del bálsamo de Palestina era pequeño y a modo de vid, como refiere Plinio de vista de ojos, y hoy día los que le han visto en Oriente dicen lo mismo; y la Sagrada Escritura, el lugar donde se daba este bálsamo le llamaba viña de Engaddi por la similitud con las vides. (212)

I am bound to say that one kind and the other are not of the same species, for we need only see that the trees from which it flows are very different.

The balsam tree of Palestine was small and resembled a vine, as Pliny states as an eyewitness, and today those who have seen it in the East say the same; and in [Sacred Literature] the place where this balsam was produced was called the vineyards of Engaddi, owing to its resemblance of a vine. (220)

In his treatise on the land and people of Brazil, Cardim makes the same comparison—between the balsam that understood as native to the vineyards of Engaddi and that of the America—that Acosta makes here.¹⁷⁶ This common reference points to the value that the missionaries place on ancient/Edenic medicine over American pharmacopeia.

However, as Acosta suggests, on the frontiers of imperial and Christian expansion, these products can be hard to come by and, “Lo que más importa es que para la sustancia de hacer crisma, que tan necesario es en la santa iglesia y de tanta veneración, ha declarado la Sede Apostólica, que con este bálsamo de Indias se haga crisma en Indias, y con él se dé el sacramento de Confirmación y los demás donde la Iglesia lo usa” (212) [What is most important is its role in making sacramental chrism, which is so necessary and so much venerated in the Holy Church. The Apostolic See has declared that chrism can be made with this balsam of the Indies and that the sacraments of Confirmation and the other sacraments in which the Church uses it can be performed with it (221)]. In her critical edition of Acosta’s *Natural and Moral History of the Indies*, Jane Mangan points out that, “The indication that the pope had to offer a declaration before Indies balsam could be used to produce holy chrism reiterates the theme running

¹⁷⁶ See Chapter Two for an analysis of the larger implications of the value that Cardim places on ancient/Edenic medicine over American botany.

through book IV, that New World species are inferior or tainted until blessed with European approval” (221n5). The need to Christianize Amerindian people and nature is a *leitmotif* in Jesuit narratives from the contact period and is indicative of the European-held belief in the humoral and moral corruption and degeneration intrinsic to the Americas due to its geographic inferiority.

Moreover, with regard to balsam from the West Indies, Acosta specifies, “No he hallado que en tiempos antiguos, los indios precisasen en mucho el bálsamo ni aun tuviesen de él uso de importancia, aunque Monardes dice que curaban con él los indios de sus heridas, y que de ellos aprendieron los españoles” (213) [I have not found that in ancient times the Indians valued balsam highly, or even used it to any important degree, although Monardes says that they cured their wounds with it and that the Spaniards learned of it from them (221)]. In this excerpt, we find further evidence to support the claim that Europeans depended on indigenous sources in their investigations into American nature—necessary to support larger colonial networks—despite their denigration of native lands and people. In the same vein of colonial ambivalence that we see in Cardim’s treatise on Brazil, Acosta depends on the same framework of demonology to condemn native healers and spiritual leaders while also (unwittingly) appropriating their knowledge of American nature, as we see in Acosta’s (mis)identification of native use of the balsam.

As we have seen in chapter 2, missionaries depended on indigenous sources for information on native healing techniques: sometimes they acquired this information through confession, which provided detailed accounts of native healing rituals. For

example, missionaries sought explicit information regarding medicinal plants in terms of, properties, dosage, and preparation. Beyond highlighting networks of transmission and exchange, my critical reading of Acosta's *Historia moral y natural* in this chapter provides further evidence that Jesuit missionaries worked to diminish the power and spiritual authority of indigenous healers and spiritual leaders in colonial Mexico. Just as was true of Cardim, Acosta's discourse of sorcery represents an ideological battle, waged against native forces to gain control over the administration of medicinal plants among Amerindian communities. As they did so, many missionary-healing techniques resembled those of their native counterparts; however, Jesuits argued that divine intervention into medicine is acceptable as long as it is the Christian God doing it. In the final instance, it was not the plant itself that caused the ideological rift between Amerindian medicinal cosmology and that of the Jesuits, but rather the supplication to non-Christian deities during the ritual.

Here, it is important to note that Acosta and Cardim make an implicit contrast between Amerindian simples—i.e. herbs, roots, and tree resin that were applied directly in their natural state—and more complex, ritually embedded unctions like that of *ololuchqui* or *petima* (a mixed drink with tobacco from Brazil). For example, simples did not require that the healer enter into a trance-like state through the consumption of psychotropic intoxicants, which would have allowed the Amerindian healer or spiritual leader to channel healing power from a cosmic source. What becomes visible through this radical shift in judgment in Acosta's and Cardim's natural and moral histories—i.e. the different evaluations that Jesuits made regarding healers that cure via the hidden virtues

of plants in their “simple” state versus “sorcerers” who summoned the Devil for their healing powers, resulting in improper plant use—is a complex milieu of medical practitioners that operated alongside one another in the colonial world, where a certain level of ambiguity was accorded to the way in which medicine was administered; that is to say, some healers were acceptable as long as they did not call on divine intervention from non-Christian deities.

Conclusion

In missionary encounters with native healers and leaders, Jesuits worked to Christianize Amerindian mythological structures as a tool for conversion. In this exchange, Jesuits studied their rites and traditions, which yielded insights into useful plants and practices for healing. Although the Jesuits maligned and condemned the pagan source of this information, Amerindian rituals represented important sites for the excavation of indigenous botanical knowledge, which Jesuit missionaries mined in their pursuit for spiritual power and authority throughout the globe. As this chapter demonstrates, Acosta’s natural and moral history provides an extensive archive of these encounters. As was true of the Jesuit power struggles in colonial Brazil, Nahua healers and spiritual leaders represent a significant oppositional force that challenged missionary efforts at colonial settlement and evangelization in Anáhuac. In the case of colonial Mexico, the Jesuits were preceded by the Franciscans, who were some of the first missionaries to spread European-borne pathogens in their missionary intervention throughout the region. As unprecedented waves of epidemic disease swept through

indigenous communities throughout the Americas missionaries paid careful attention to local medicinal plants.

Not only did native pharmacopeia serve to treat the sick and dying (key to the missionary effort to win over souls for the Church), but it also served as an economic support for the Company of Jesus's missions throughout the globe. As we look at the systematic approach that Jesuit missionaries took in their study of American nature in colonial Brazil and Mexico, Acosta's natural and moral history serves as an important counterpart to Cardim's treatise on the land and people of Brazil in that it illuminates the significance (and loss) that Cardim's project represented for the Company of Jesus. Acosta, in contrast, published one of the most extensive natural histories on the West Indies, which was widely circulated in and through the global network that the religious order has established and beyond. Indeed, the study of the Jesuit appropriation of indigenous knowledge in their natural histories is essential to the understanding Jesuit missionary contributions to the history of science and medicine. As missionaries engaged with Amerindian healers and spiritual leaders throughout the Americas, they depended on native knowledge of the natural world to identify *materia medica*, possible foodstuffs, along with other valuable resources.

Conclusion

Dance as Medicine: Indigenous Sites of Agency in the Americas

In their attempts at “spiritual conquest,” Jesuits systematically waged ideological battle against non-Christian healers and spiritual leaders. At the same time, in the face of never-before-seen infectious disease, missionary intervention caused intense social unrest among Amerindian populations. In this process, many Amerindians turned to Christianity, either believing that their own gods had deserted them in the wake of the epidemic devastation or identifying as Christian in order to take advantage of mission resources.¹⁷⁷ As the spread of Old World disease in the Americas decimated native populations, with some epidemics spreading concurrently in an unprecedented fashion, there was a strong impetus to collect information on botanical medicine in and around the mission settlements. The Company of Jesus as a religious order is of particular interest

¹⁷⁷ See Ramón A. Gutiérrez, *When Jesus Came, the Corn Mothers Went Away: Marriage, Sexuality, and Power, 1500-1846*, “The Spanish Conquest of New Mexico,” 39-94. In this chapter Gutiérrez questions the nature of conversion, pointing to the difficulties in making an assessment of whether ‘true’ Christianization had taken place. In the case of New Mexico, he notes that: “For Indian residents of small New Mexican pueblos constantly under attack, despoiled of their food, and forced to abandon well-watered spots, the mission fathers offered the semblance of protection. In numbers there was strength, and behind the massive wall of the mission fathers offered the semblance of protection... Christianization to these persons meant a reliable meat supply, iron supplements of various sorts, and European foods: wheat, legumes, green vegetables, melons, grapes, and a variety of orchard fruits. It does not strain the imagination to envision why such persons, understandably nervous and ambivalent at the arrival of the ‘Children of the Sun,’ might have allied themselves as Christians with the new social order” (94).

given their unique position during this stage of globalization; the Jesuits would play a complex political game involving the Catholic Church, European monarchs, Iberian nobility, public officials, merchants, Amerindians, and African slaves.

For this reason, Jesuit writings on the Americas reveal the complex social web that arises as competing discourses on magic, medicine, and religion intersect in early modern missionary encounters with Amerindian healers and spiritual leaders. As I demonstrate in my analysis of Jesuit epistolary correspondence from colonial Brazil in chapter 1, a reconstruction of the cognitive mechanisms that inform the Jesuit discourse of sorcery, used to justify their “spiritual conquest” throughout the Americas, is demonstrative of the colonial ambivalence that informs Jesuit writings from the Americas: they value indigenous knowledge for practical use while they demonize the Amerindians that possess this knowledge. I dedicate chapters 2 and 3 to a critical reading of Acosta’s and Cardim’s natural histories on the Americas. Both missionaries rely on Pliny’s model of natural history and Aristotelian natural philosophy to inscribe American geography within the bounds of European cosmography. As we have seen in both cases, the missionaries’ valorization of ancient/Edenic nature over American nature is symptomatic of Eurocentric myths regarding the moral (and physical) degeneration of the Tropics, thereby asserting the Amerindian’s moral incapacity to self-govern. Europeans justified their juridical “right” to colonize and exploit American nature via this logic inscribed within medieval and early modern climate theories.

On a larger scale, this project also contributes to the history of science and medicine by highlighting the role of the Spanish and Portuguese empires in this trajectory

as well as the role of indigenous informants in the Iberian contribution to developments in the Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment. Information-gathering processes in the Atlantic World relied heavily on reports of personal experience and testimony by Iberian witnesses to the wonders of American nature. The result of this shift had drastic effects on historiographical discourse in the form of revisions to classical texts from which this humanistic tradition derives. This questioning of previously established nodules of knowledge gave way to the early Scientific Revolution and found its grounding principles in empirical research instead of classic philosophy, which ultimately led to a re-mapping of European epistemology. In the context of the Jesuits, the reconfiguration of classical models was heavily determined by occult philosophy and its implied theological debates. We can specifically look at the discipline of natural history to unravel the complexity of the history of science and medicine in the Spanish and Portuguese empires, and, subsequently, to understand the role of magic within this process.

The writings of seventeenth-century Jesuit philosophers such as Juan E. Nieremberg (*Curiosa y oculta filosofía*) and Hernando del Castrillo (*Historia y magia natural, o ciencia de filosofía oculta*) serve as evidence that the occult sciences were prevalent within the scope of Iberian natural histories produced by the Company of Jesus. It is important to note that within Renaissance cosmography—understood as the science that classified the universe within the frame of Ptolemaic geography and an Aristotelian understanding of nature in order to configure the natural world as the syntax of the divine—the occult was not on the periphery of this discourse but rather operated at the forefront of Jesuit science. The overlapping discourses on magic, medicine, and religion

highlight the social and political tensions that characterize early modern science and medicine. As this study demonstrates, at the same time that missionary scientists depended on pagan knowledge sources, they categorically described them as demonic. Despite their ambivalence with regard to the “moral ambiguity” of their sources, the study of (“demonic”) magic had a significant impact in the scientific progress of the period, which has been largely overlooked within the broader scope of early modern history.

This dissertation has primarily focused on indigenous healing practices and practitioners that were condemned by the Jesuits, even as they valorized and expropriated that knowledge. The story has thus overwhelming been of destruction and expropriation. Yet Jesuit writings can also offer evidence of cultural survival and continuity. For example—in contrast with some of the more bloody Nahuatl rituals (*las guerras floridas*, for example) that Acosta condemns in his natural and moral history—he more favorably describes other indigenous practices that might have more successfully continued after the conquest. I argue that this tentative acceptance is precisely because he and other Christian missionaries failed to see its connection to healing rituals and sacred deities. That is the case of the *mitote* (i.e. native dance rituals) that he describes witnessing during his time in Mexico:

En Tepotzotlán, que es un pueblo siete leguas de México, vi hacer el baile o mitote que he dicho, en el patio de la iglesia, y me pareció bien ocupar y entretener los indios, días de fiestas, pues tienen necesidad de alguna recreación, y en aquella que es pública y sin perjuicio de nadie, hay menos

inconvenientes que en otras que podrían hacer a sus solas, si les quitasen éstas. (355-56)

In Tepotzotlán, which is a town seven leagues from Mexico, I saw the dance, or *mitote*, that I have described performed in the courtyard of the church, and it seemed a good thing to occupy and entertain the Indians on feast days; for they need some recreation, and recreation that is public and harms no one and has fewer disadvantages than others that the Indians might perform by themselves should these dances be taken away from them. (376)

Here, Acosta categorizes native dance as “recreation,” thereby absolving the rituals of any “superstitious” activity. As scholars such as Inga Clendinnen, Diana Taylor, Lisa Voigt, and others have shown, indigenous festive practices were often tolerated under the auspices of Christianized forms of indigenous rites and practices.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁸ As Taylor (*The Archive and the Repertoire*) argues (and Acosta’s text evinces), “Religion proved a vital conduit of social (as well as religious) behavior. The transfers occurred not just in the uneasy tensions between religious systems but within the religious systems themselves” (44). While Acosta is careful to characterize the *mitote* as a form of recreation and rejoicing, for native people, these dances engaged with cultural and symbolic tropes significant within traditional sign systems. For this reason, the Christian acceptance of the *mitote* was not without controversy. Clendinnen cites the first Mexican council of bishops in 1539, which explicitly restricted: the consumption of alcohol (Castilian wine); the production of traditional music; the burning of ritual incense, such as copal, as well as ritual fires (115). However, as Clendinnen’s research shows, “The effort failed. The Church continued to suffer a population explosion of musicians and singers, and a doubtfully holy cacophony of trumpets and drum and other unsuitable instruments. The Indians persisted in making a song and dance of their religion, in time with the de facto tolerance of their spiritual leaders. The extent of their tolerance is surprising. It is as if the massive dimensions of the task of conversion, and the apparently equivocal evidence of enthusiasm for Christianity—Indians falling on their knees before friars, weeping, moaning, begging for baptism—worked to disarm suspicion

Moreover, dance (along with its ritual accompaniments in the form of song, music, dress, and ritual plant use) served as both spiritual and physical medicine as native communities faced the dis-ease produced by settler colonialism throughout the Americas. Christian missionaries on the frontier of Iberian imperial expansion in colonial Mexico confronted just such an integrated, performative religiosity. In Mesoamerican traditions, the sun, the moon, and the stars are the vital lifeline by which human existence is determined. In connection with this, indigenous people negotiate their cosmic place in the universe through their ritual ties with several different deities, which is key to maintaining the sacred equilibrium essential to the individual's as well as the community's overall health and wellness.¹⁷⁹ As Guillermo Bonfil Batalla has shown,

and cloud memory" ("Ways to the Sacred" 115). Voigt's research on colonial festivals is among the most recent scholarship on the matter; for a general overview of the research to date on colonial festivals see her introduction to *Spectacular Wealth*, 1-18. In chapter 3 of this same work, Voigt finds that "Although accounts written by Spaniards or creoles inevitably reveal more about the authors' own perspectives, when read against the grain they can also illuminate how indigenous peoples may have interpreted the festivals and their participation in them. Festivals sometimes escaped the control of the powerful, and their representation occasionally eluded the textual agendas of those who recorded them" (92). She concludes that, "The festive participation of native Andeans, in other words, corresponds less to a hidden transcript of outright resistance to Spanish rule—or for that matter, to the worship of hidden idols under a thin veneer of Christianity—than to the more subtle ways in which indigenous groups borrowed, reinterpreted, or altered the goals of the Spanish and Christian festive practices, ways that cannot simply be categorized as submissive or subversive" (92).

¹⁷⁹ The Mesoamerican pantheon is both complicated and diverse, as each individual group elected a primary god—supplemented with other deities from the main pantheon—based on the needs and values of their particular community. The Mexica, for example, chose *Huitzilopochtli* as one of their primaries, given his role as both sun and war god. In the Mexica myth of their foundation of Tenochtitlán, *Huitzilopochtli* (translated in Náhuatl as Hummingbird of the South) led the first group of Mexica to their new imperial seat in the central valley of Mexico. While *Huitzilopochtli* is the main deity in the Mexica pantheon, Acosta also finds devotional sites dedicated to *Tlaloc*, the god of rain; *Tezcatlipoca*, the trickster god; and *Toci*, the earth mother goddess. In the case of colonial

Amerindians frame healthcare as a “multiple therapy” that addresses both the physical and spiritual equilibrium of the patient. Bonfil Batalla concludes that, “Human conduct conditions health; the knowledge of the curative properties of plants forms part of the total conception of nature and is expressed with corresponding symbolism. What we call religion and what we call medicine are intertwined in many ways, so the distinction is erased” (*México Profundo* 35). The *mitote* witnessed by Acosta in Tepotzotlán may have been just such a ritual.

During European conquest and colonization in the Americas, Christian missionaries prohibited many indigenous rites and customs because they served as conduits between Natives and their “devilish” gods. Yet Acosta’s description shows one way in which indigenous healing practices continued after the conquest, since the cultural rituals that accompany the administration of medicine form an integral part of the overall healing technique (as we see in the case of the *mitote*). The Jesuits meticulously documented their philosophical writings on theology as well as their experiences associated with missionary work with autochthonous cultures across the globe. For the Jesuits, reducing the role of indigenous healers and spiritual leaders and substituting them with Jesuit missionaries were the keys to Christianizing indigenous myths and rituals effectively. However, some healing rituals were preserved, providing important sites of power and knowledge for native peoples who continue to assert their agency in a system that has historically denied them this basic human right.

Mexico, this was the pantheon that missionaries worked to replace with a cosmological order in which the Christian God reigned supreme.

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