

over the *raison d'être* of censorship in Mexico, in light of a near-nonexistent literate clientele and a similarly feeble infrastructure of printers or booksellers in Mexico. It was only in the 1760s that Augustin Dhervé's one bookshop was opened in Mexico City.

A number of significant secondary sources are surprisingly absent from the bibliography for this book. Among them are Carlo Ginzburg's classic study "High and Low, the Theme of Forbidden Knowledge during the Sixteenth and the Seventeenth Centuries" (1976), Bartolomé Bennassar's extensive study on book printing in Valladolid between 1481 and 1600 (1967), and Lucienne Domergue's *La censure des livres en Espagne a la fin de l'Ancien Régime* (1996). Still, this book is highly recommendable for both its research and eloquence.

*University of Haifa*  
*Haifa, Israel*

AMOS MEGGED

*The Invisible War: Indigenous Devotions, Discipline, and Dissent in Colonial Mexico.* By David Tavárez. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011. Pp. xii, 400. Glossary. Notes. Bibliography. Index. Illustrations.

The "invisible war" in the title of this book refers to changing Spanish efforts to eradicate native religious beliefs and practices in Mexico—a complicated matter for the Spaniards and an intellectual challenge to any scholar. David Tavárez admirably meets this challenge in this systematic and thoroughly documented work. This book covers a great deal of territory geographically, temporally, and conceptually. Geographically it focuses on Nahuatl-speaking communities in central Mexico (the Basin of Mexico, Toluca, the Coahuilca-Tlalhuica region) and Zapotec speakers in Oaxaca, comparing and contrasting these regions in terms of religious extirpation efforts and native practices and responses (some interpreted as resistance) during the colonial period. The period considered extends from the 1530s to the late eighteenth century and the many changes in Spanish policy, the activities of high-level Spanish officials, and the practice of native religions. Tavárez usefully divides this broad period into four distinct cycles, based on notable changes in Spanish approaches to the treatment of native idolatries. Beyond regional contrasts and temporal dynamics, this book offers useful conceptual approaches. Primary among them is the contrast between collective and elective spheres in native devotions. Spaniards attempted to absorb collective (community-oriented) devotions into Christianity while they sought to suppress elective beliefs and activities centered on calendrical, life-cycle, healing, and other ritual knowledge and activities enacted at a personal level. Tavárez also examines his vast documentary corpus in terms of gender differences in native ritual practitioners and assumes local diversity in native beliefs and practices. These approaches enrich the book in providing meaningful interpretations of complicated processes and interpersonal interactions.

Tavárez anchors his discussion in a myriad of documented historical actors and liturgical cases, revealing not only ideological stances but also fascinating social and political

relationships. These cases allow the reader to better understand, for instance, the implementation and distribution of different Spanish extirpation strategies for dealing with “idolaters,” from corporal punishment to public humiliation; isolation in a “perpetual prison” (in Oaxaca); confiscation of native images, effigies, and texts; and medical examinations. The cases also embed fascinating details of native ritual specialists, practices, and paraphernalia, a gold mine for any student who might seek associations with pre-Conquest religions as revealed through archaeological remains and ethnohistoric records.

This book offers the reader much to think about, in particular the theme of regional and ethnic diversity. While this book concentrates on comparisons and contrasts between central Mexico and Oaxaca, Tavárez repeatedly emphasizes diversity, not only along these broad regional lines, but also from community to community, person to person, and time period to time period. This is a point well taken, and worth considering in any aspect of research in culturally and politically complicated regions. Also highlighted is the issue of local conflicts and factions, not just along native vs. Spanish lines, but among Spanish authorities themselves (ecclesiastical and civil) and commonly enough among indigenous persons of the same community who found themselves competing for local resources and political positions. For instance, in late seventeenth and early eighteenth century Oaxaca, some local native factions made sorcery and idolatry accusations against one another since “any native official convicted of idolatry or superstition was removed from his post” and that position would then be available to a new occupant (p. 255). Especially concerning native-to-native conflicts, these cases reveal more than just religious matters at the community level; they provide a window into broader economic, social, and political relationships as well. For example, certain trends in accusations suggest social status and gender issues: central Mexico experienced a decrease in accusations against male nobles and officeholders from the 1520s to the late eighteenth century, while accusations against commoner women increased from the early seventeenth century onward, indicating a “disassociation of traditional ritual practices with public office” in the first instance, and “an increase in the visibility of female specialists in the elective sphere” in the second (p. 275).

This book is worthy of inclusion in any Mesoamerican historian’s library. Tavárez offers a thoughtful framework for examining Spanish/Spanish, native/Spanish and native/native interactions under stressful conditions; valuable insights into these complex and multifaceted relationships; and plenty of interesting biographical, institutional and situational information. All of these elements together make this a useful reference work as well.

*California State University, San Bernardino*  
*San Bernardino, California*

FRANCES BERDAN