The Sins of the Fathers: Franciscan Friars, Parish Priests, and the Sexual Conquest of the Yucatec Maya, 1545–1808

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Abstract. Differing from the rapid political, economic, and social conquests, the conquest of indigenous sexuality was often a long and deeply contested arena of indigenous-Spanish encounters. The roots of what can be called the “sexual conquest” of the Yucatec Maya began with the initial missions of the Franciscan friars. The earliest friars produced vocabularies, grammars, sermons, and confession manuals as tools for their missionary effort. By analyzing these missionary creations, we can approach an understanding of the friars’ views of Maya sexuality. The Maya, however, often took the missionary teachings concerning proper and improper sexual activities, and through the lens of their own cultural concepts of sexuality and sexual relations they manipulated them for their own purposes. This paper will examine how the knowledge of the “sins of the fathers” served both the missionaries and the Maya in their struggle for control over the complex nature of evolving colonial sexuality.

In that time there will be lies and madness, and also lust and fornication.
—Chilam Balam of Chumayel

On 6 July 1609, Francisco Ek and his son Clemente traveled from the Maya town of Hocaba to the city of Mérida to appear before Fray Hernando de Nava, the commissary of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in the province of Yucatán. Francisco Ek presented a petition that the interpreter, Fray Rodrigo Tinoco, translated from the Maya. Francisco pleaded, “We come before your Excellency . . . in order to tell you and let you know how it is that Padre Cristóbal de Valencia perverts the good Christian doctrine of the town of Hocaba.”¹

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The Eks told a terrible tale, one filled with sexual violence and clerical misconduct. According to the Maya, Father Cristóbal de Valencia called Clemente to a confession in his sacristy. The priest suddenly appeared naked, telling Clemente: “Come and take my private parts in your hands and play with them because this is the service of God and it is the office of the saints who are in heaven. . . . and if you do not comply with this and play with my private parts, go and bring me your wife, because she has a large vagina and has slept with the entire village.”

Clemente responded in shock, “Why do you say this, Father, this is a very shameful thing. . . . look here is the sacred chalice and you say this in front of it.” The priest retorted, “Don’t you come here and preach to me. . . . I will have my way with you without anyone ever knowing it and if not I will kill you tonight!” According to Clemente, the priest cursed and attacked him. He then pulled down Clemente’s breeches and grabbed his penis, squeezing it until blood ran. He then mockingly challenged Clemente, “Go and complain about this to the bishop or the inquisitor. . . . I have the power to burn you alive and I am not afraid. . . . even if four hundred bishops come here I will not dirty my pants out of fear. . . . I am the bishop here.”

Following this sexual violation, Clemente Ek and his father went to denounce the priest before the Inquisition. The horrified commissary of the Inquisition ordered the priest’s arrest and an immediate investigation. Following the graphic accusations of these two Maya men, Padre Cristóbal de Valencia lost his post as the parish priest of Hocaba and faced a trial that lasted for several years.

Trial testimony revealed that Valencia was a well-known pervert and a pederast. By all accounts, he had taken sexual advantage of virtually all members of his parish, either in private or in the sanctity of the confessional. Testimony and accusations poured into the investigator’s office as Mayas from the towns of Hocaba, Sanlahcat, Yaxcaba, and Hoctun came forward to denounce the priest for sexual abuse. The ecclesiastical authorities considered the accusation that Valencia abused the sacrament of confession to be the most abhorrent and damning. Charges of sexually molesting parishioners or living in open concubinage with Indian women seldom led to serious sanction. Accusations of impropriety in the confessional or solicitation of sex during confession, in contrast, ended a clergyman’s career.

Things, however, were not always as they seemed. Valencia claimed that the Mayas falsely accused him because he had punished them for drunkenness and idolatry. The priest stated that

both this native and other natives testify falsely against him out of the hatred that they have for his having punished them for their crimes.
against God and their other vices and sins which he preached against publicly. He refers the Inquisitor to the testimony and opinions of the other parish priests who have served in the province of Hocaba who know and can tell him how it is public knowledge that the Mayas from the town of Hocaba have a common practice of raising false testimony against their priests in order to get rid of them.\(^\text{10}\)

This leaves the historian with the question of whom to believe, the Mayas or the priest. The overwhelming number of Mayas who testified against the priest suggests either a high level of sexual depravity on the part of the clergyman or an impressive ability of the Maya to conspire to remove their priest. Whatever the answer, the trial against Padre Valencia reveals the intricate nature of sexual relations and sexual morality in colonial Yucatán.

The Maya, following the conquest, found themselves threatened by an alien culture that sought to impose an entirely new code of sexuality and morality over long-standing traditions and beliefs. The Maya quickly learned that Spain’s cultural codes could be manipulated and turned against their conquerors who sought to impose their religion and morality on them. The historian Guido Ruggerio argues that in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century Europe two very different worlds of sexuality emerged: the world of marriage and procreation, and the libertine world in which women were raped, prostitutes used, nuns seduced, and boys sodomized.\(^\text{11}\)

When the Spaniards conquered the province of Yucatán, they encountered a third world of traditional Maya sexual customs and practices. The Maya, in turn, were caught in a confusing sexual universe, where Spanish libertines raped and abused them while simultaneously preaching the values of marriage and chastity, and the sins inherent in sexuality.\(^\text{12}\)

The Yucatec Maya, however, quickly learned how to use the Europeans’ contradictory attitude toward sexuality and morality for their own purposes. Accusations of sexual misconduct, especially against priests and friars, became potent weapons for the colonial Maya, otherwise powerless to defend themselves against the economic and/or sexual abuses of their priests and friars. The use of Europe’s sexual morality to defend Maya culture is a metaphor for the Maya’s ability, despite oppressive adversity, to protect themselves during the centuries of colonial rule.

This case against Padre Cristóbal de Valencia is but one of many formal accusations of sexual misconduct and solicitation of sex in the confessional in colonial Yucatán (see table 3 in the appendix). Cases such as this one are pivotal in understanding both how Spanish Catholicism attempted to regulate the sexuality of Europeans and their colonial subjects, and how individual Mayas responded to and reacted against these attempts.\(^\text{13}\)
Maya accusations of fornication and sexual misconduct are widespread in colonial documents. Their denunciations of and petitions against Catholic clergymen reveal the intricate layers of sexual morality and sexuality that existed in New Spain. They illustrate how the Maya and Spanish Christian concepts of sexuality and sexual perversion diverged, intermingled, and collided. The encounters and collisions between these different cultural concepts are most evident in the accusations against clergymen found guilty of *solicitación*. The conflicting views of sexual normalcy and perversion indicate that in the early colonial period there had been an attempt at a “sexual conquest.” This conquest proved incomplete and must be seen as a metaphor for how the Maya used Spain’s culture as a political weapon to defend their own civilization. The Spanish tried to “conquer” the sexuality and morals of the Yucatec Maya by imposing their own values forcibly on the region. At the same time, as they attempted to impose their moral first world of sexuality on the Maya, they also brought the Maya into the second world of Spanish libertine sexuality and abuse. The Maya exploited these contradictions, creating a universe where they defended their traditional third world of Maya sex and sexuality from the Spaniards by pitting the colonizers’ first world of morality against the second world of libertine sexuality. The astute Maya shrewdly used accusations of sexual misconduct to defend their unique culture, including its sexual mores, against their Spanish overlords, administrators, and priests. This Maya struggle to maintain their traditions against the Spaniards, however, also transformed their own views of sexuality as these three worlds collided.

Although a majority of Yucatec Maya undoubtedly suffered real sexual abuse, a significant number of them cleverly manipulated European sexual morality to subvert the colonial system. The many worlds of sexual exploitation, abuse, and accusation illustrate how the politics of culture, morality, and sexuality helped to shape colonial Yucatán as the Maya skillfully maneuvered the two worlds of Spanish sexuality against each other, all the while struggling to maintain their own view of sex and sexuality, which had little to do with either the strict chastity of Spanish Catholicism or the passionate sexuality of the Renaissance libertine.

**Pre-Columbian Maya Attitudes and Sexual Morality**

Sex and concepts of sexuality have played a major role in determining how people respond to their environment. When two different cultures come into contact, their concepts of sex and sexuality inevitably clash and conflict. Maya concepts of sexuality differed markedly from those held by the Spanish colonizers. As Pete Sigal has argued, “For the preconquest Maya,
sexuality was a part of a greater ritual discourse and performance, and all sex acts were understood in terms of their power to create, maintain, and destroy society.” As Sigal argues, the Maya adapted to life under colonial rule, but they neither fully abandoned their earlier views concerning sexuality nor completely adopted the formulation of sexuality prescribed by Spanish Catholicism. Instead, as Sigal concludes, “they evolved hybridized notions of sexual desire.” Nevertheless, the Maya’s contacts with Spaniards, both religious and secular, would greatly impact their own conceptions and worldviews.

According to surviving historical and ethnohistorical evidence, the preconquest Maya knew of and participated in a large variety of sexual relations and sexual contact including vaginal and anal intercourse, oral sex, masturbation, pederasty (with boys and girls), bestiality, and unspecified sexual acts between women. Unlike Europeans, the Maya also conceived of engaging in ritualized sexual acts with gods and animals. In fact, in several instances, images of Maya gods and goddesses in copulation have survived in the iconography of Maya art (see fig. 1). In the pre-Hispanic codices, however, female deities are occasionally shown engaging
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in sexual intercourse, but the images are far from explicit. With the exception of the goddesses caressing the face of their male counterpart, and their naked revealed breast, no graphic displays of Maya sexuality exist to compare with the explicit images of sexual relations portrayed in the Moche pottery of pre-Hispanic Peru.

In Classic Maya representations of art and iconography, images of naked women are rare, with only a few examples existing (see fig. 2).

However, it is documented that before the conquest, Maya men and women went about seminude, with the women covered only from their waists down, especially in the coastal regions, and the men wearing only loincloths that revealed more than they covered (see fig. 3).²¹

Preconquest Maya sexuality, however, reveals a few unexplainable paradoxes that confuse the otherwise simplistic description of categories of sexual conduct. Even among the preconquest Maya, there was a dichotomy between the norm and the reality of sexual conduct. According to most sources, all Maya but the highest nobles were supposed to practice monogamy.²² However, according to a few early colonial sources, even the common Maya could easily “divorce” their spouses and engage in a type of serial monogamy. The Spaniard Alonso Julián, writing shortly after

Figure 2. Images of explicit nudity in pre-Hispanic Maya art. (a) Detail of a naked female goddess. Redrawn from a Maya ceramic vase, provenience unknown, ca. AD 600–1000, Justin Kerr Collection, Kerr #1339. (b) Detail of a nude Maya goddess mounted on a mythical deer. Redrawn from a Maya ceramic vase, provenience unknown, ca. AD 600–1000, Justin Kerr Collection, Kerr #1339. (c) Detail of one of the male Maya figures “bleeding” his penis from the Maya murals of San Bartolo, Guatemala. Drawings by Argelia Segovia Liga.
Figure 3. Images of typical male and female Maya dress. (a) Image of Maya man wearing typical “ex” or loincloth. Redrawn from a Maya ceramic vase, provenience unknown, ca. AD 600–1000, Justin Kerr Collection, Kerr #2357. (b) Image of a bare-breasted Maya woman wearing a typical Maya skirt. Detail of a figure from the Maya Dresden Codex (17a), ca. AD 1200–1500. Drawings by Argelia Segovia Liga.
the conquest, stated that the large populations the Europeans had earlier encountered existed because of the “many women that each Indian man had.”

Martín de Palomar corrected this error, adding that “they did not commonly live with more than one woman, but for the most trivial of things they could leave their wives, and they married again with another woman, and there were among them men who had married ten or twelve times, and others more or less, and this same liberty also belonged to the women, who could leave their husbands and take other men.”

Polygamy was the rule for Maya kings, but apparently higher and even mid-level nobles could take a large number of concubines. Juan Gutiérrez Picón, encomendero of Ekbalam, observed that although the lords and rich principal men were each “assigned one woman, this did not stop them from having female slaves for concubines.”

The earliest conquerors also commented on aspects of Maya sexuality that they considered strange or different. In terms of Maya concepts of virginity, a Spanish observer in the Maya town of Motul remarked that one rite of passage involved a red colored stone as a symbol of a young Maya girl’s virginity:

The mothers of the little girls placed a red colored stone tied to a string that they let hang over the little girls’ shameful parts, and this served as a sign that the girl was a virgin, and when they had their type of baptism ceremony, they cut off this string and they took away the stone, and from that point on they could be married. . . . but if the young girls were not still virgins, their priests would not give them this baptism.

The Maya before the conquest also apparently attempted to control the sexual conduct of their people. According to Pedro de Santanilla, the encomendero of the Maya town of Muxuppipp, “In their paganism, they had fasting as a good custom, and they ate only a little; and they punished the vices of the flesh very cruelly, not consenting that there should exist any man or women who committed adultery, and if there were, they both died for it; and they did not eat human flesh before, nor did they commit the nefarious sin [pecado nefando].”

Fray Diego de Landa echoed the encomendero’s claim that sodomy had not existed before the conquest. He observed that sodomy, or the nefarious act against nature, appeared oddly absent, writing that “I have not learned of their doing this in this country, nor do I believe they did so.”

Apparently, the Maya did have defined categories and sanctions for adultery, incest, and rape. Gaspar Antonio Xiu, a descendant of a ruling Maya dynasty at Mani, wrote in his own historical recollections that
the Indians here punished vices and sins with rigor. . . . the man or
women who committed adultery were killed, shot with arrows. . . .
they abhorred all types of sins of the flesh and they punished them
severely, even among very important and prominent people. . . . He
who raped or violated a young girl received the death penalty. . . . and
he who had relations with a married women was also put to death. . . .
and he who impregnated a slave woman or married her would be
made a slave himself.29

Other early observers and later Franciscan historians such as Fray Diego
López de Cogolludo also noted the precontact Maya’s rigorous punish-
ments for sexual crimes such as adultery and rape.30 Maya concepts of
sexual conduct and sexual perversion can be understood by examining
the surviving colonial dictionaries (only a few examples of Maya terms for
sexual conduct are found in table 1). However, due to their high number
of terms that deal with explicitly lustful and promiscuous sexual prac-
tices, the earliest Franciscan dictionaries themselves appear to contradict
any effective pre-Columbian systemic control over Maya sexual conduct.
Although Maya culture and custom dictated against sexual perversions, the
Maya appear to have been quite promiscuous if we accept Maya vocabu-
lary recorded in these dictionaries. Though mainly monogamous in their
marriages, the Maya colonial dictionaries contained many words in Maya
to describe promiscuous extramarital liaisons between men and women.
Thus, the earliest Spanish observers noted that preconquest Maya society
had distinct concepts of sexual propriety that helped to control what the
Spanish clergy viewed as the sexually destructive behavior of adultery and
sexual promiscuity. Nevertheless, most Mayas, especially women, appar-
ently followed a strict code of sexual behavior that was rigorously enforced
by their Maya priests and rulers.

Maya Sexual Encounters and Collisions:
A Sexual Conquest?

Putería ni hurto nunca se encubren mucho.
(Neither sexual promiscuity nor theft is long covered up.)
—Sixteenth-century Castilian proverb

Any image of a chaste and sexually pure Maya world that might have
existed before the conquest quickly came under assault. Many clergymen
believed that Maya sexual conduct changed when the Maya came into con-
tact with the Europeans. According to most early colonial observers, pre-
Table 1. Maya terms for various sexual acts and relations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maya Term/Word</th>
<th>Spanish Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maya Sexuality: Adultery</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ah calpach</td>
<td>adultero</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ah pay bey</td>
<td>alcahueta, o alcahuete</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ah tzubancil</td>
<td>amancebado</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caapatcunah</td>
<td>poner los cuernos la mujer al marido o el marido a la mujer</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 111</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maya Sexuality: Prostitution</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ah concooil/Ix cooil</td>
<td>rafían que vende mujeres, para que pequeñ con ellas</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ah con tzubul</td>
<td>puta, que ella se convida y vende</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ah ppen</td>
<td>pecador carnal, lujurioso, putañero</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ix kakat na pel</td>
<td>puta que anda de casa en casa dando su cuerpo</td>
<td>Vocabulario de Maya Than, 547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ah kakat na cep</td>
<td>putañero que anda todo, vagabundo con su miembro</td>
<td>Vocabulario de Maya Than, 547</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maya Sexuality: Lust and Fornication</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ah coo tzicbal</td>
<td>parlero deshonesto y carnal</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ah docchan keban</td>
<td>gran pecador, que tiene grandes pecados</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ah oppchek box coo</td>
<td>malo y perverso, que no entiende su mala vida hasta que lo cogen en el delito</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ah oppchek box cooeh</td>
<td>eres malo y perverso</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ah tzucach than</td>
<td>deshonesto en hablar</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ah tzucyah</td>
<td>deshonesto, lujurioso</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dziboolah</td>
<td>deseo de mujeres, con deseo carnal</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dziboolachil</td>
<td>aquel deseo</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 216</td>
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### Maya Sexuality: Masturbation

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<tr>
<th>Maya Term/Word</th>
<th>Spanish Definition</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baxalaan tan ba</td>
<td>tocarse unos a otros impúdicamente</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baxal ba</td>
<td>tocarse impúdicamente, y los tales tocamientos</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baxta ba</td>
<td>tocarse con tactos impúdicos a sí mismo</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baxtah cucutil</td>
<td>cometer pecado de molición consigo mismo o con otro</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colach</td>
<td>contratarse o sobajarse uno sus vergüenzas o las de otro</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 133</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colbakel</td>
<td>idem, polución voluntaria</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 133</td>
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### Maya Sexuality: Purity and Sexual Abstinence

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<th>Maya Term/Word</th>
<th>Spanish Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chabtan</td>
<td>hacer penitencia darse a ayunos y abstenerse de delitos de la carne</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chabtan uinic</td>
<td>hombre abstinente continente y observante de la ley de Dios</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuxtal ool</td>
<td>perder la virginidad</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 150</td>
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### Maya Sexuality: Oral Sex

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<tr>
<th>Maya Term/Word</th>
<th>Spanish Definition</th>
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<tr>
<td>Chii keban</td>
<td>pecado que se comete con la boca, chupando las vergüenzas</td>
<td>Calepino de Motul, 242</td>
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Although conquest Yucatec Maya women lived chaste and virtuous lives.\textsuperscript{31} Although they wore little clothing, their modesty was such that they avoided looking men in the eye for fear of provoking their desire. If a girl did look at a man, her mother punished her indiscretion. This idyllic view of Maya chastity and sexual purity, whether exaggerated or not, quickly changed after the initial contact with the Europeans. Landa stated that Maya women were so chaste before the arrival of the Spaniards that it was a marvel to behold.\textsuperscript{32} To explain the virtue of Maya women, Landa gave an example of the violence of the sexual conquest: “The captain Alonso López de Avila, father-in-law of the \textit{adelantado} Francisco Montejo, captured a handsome and graceful Indian girl during the war at Bacalar. She, in fear of death for her husband, had promised him never to yield herself to another, and for this nothing could persuade her, even fear of death, to consent to violation; so that they threw her to the dogs.”\textsuperscript{33} Maya women were not always the victims, sometimes they fought back. Another story tells of an Indian maiden who, being raped by a Spanish soldier, took his dagger from his holster and plunged it into his heart, only to be run through by the sword of one of his friends. Not all of these forced unions ended in the suicide or murder of Maya women. A large number of illegitimate mestizo children are mentioned after the conquest and many were recognized by their Spanish fathers, who left them inheritances. Even the Spanish conqueror of

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<tr>
<td>\textit{Ah topchun}</td>
<td>sodomita, garzón</td>
<td>\textit{Calepino de Motul}, 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Ah toplom Chun}</td>
<td>idem</td>
<td>\textit{Calepino de Motul}, 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Ah toplom it}</td>
<td>sodomitas</td>
<td>\textit{Calepino de Motul}, 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>\textit{Ix ppnimil keban}</td>
<td>pecar un hombre con otro, sodomia y cometerla</td>
<td>\textit{Vocabulario de Maya Than}, 510, 595</td>
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<th>Maya Sexuality: Homosexuality</th>
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<td>\textit{Chij Keban}</td>
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<td>\textit{cuchpach keban}</td>
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Yucatán, Francisco de Montejo, had a mestizo son, Diego, by an unknown Indian woman, and favored him with encomiendas and other benefits.\(^3^4\) Nevertheless, violent sexual encounters of conquerors and conquered were quite common during the early days of the conquest. The Spanish soldiers, who had no women in their parties, took native women as their concubines and lovers. Some Spaniards were given women as gifts, and others took them by force. In fact, the first conflicts during the military conquest resulted from the Maya’s anger when the Spaniards raided their villages for the prettiest girls. The earliest conquerors attempted to curb the sexual appetites of their soldiers, but to no avail. Francisco de Montejo, the conqueror of Yucatán, prohibited his soldiers from taking young Indian girls from their villages and allowed no soldier to engage in sexual intercourse with an Indian maiden unless he married her.\(^3^5\) However, like most sexual prohibitions, Montejo’s orders fell on deaf ears. Gaspar Pacheco, according to colonial reports one of the most unscrupulous of the early conquerors, began to prostitute the young women his troops had gained as tribute from their allied caciques. One soldier in his company reportedly wrote that “the Spaniards are allowed to choose among one hundred and fifty Indian maidens, the ones they liked best, paying for each one an arroba of wine or oil, or vinegar, or a pig.”\(^3^6\)

So great was the impact of the sexual conquest that the Maya wrote in their books of Chilam Balam that the Spaniards were “whoremongers”:

> When the Spaniards arrived, they brought shameful things. . . . The black sickness. . . . The coveting of the beauty of girls. . . . Whoremongering came with them. . . . The prostitution of the village girls came with them. . . . Before they came, Oh brothers, there was not lust, there was not envy. . . . Before the Strangers came there was no suffering, nor was their robbing of men’s wives. . . . With them came shameful things. . . . With them came the selling of the women and the unclean things. . . . With them came the end of the flower people.\(^3^7\)

Even the more scrupulous of the Spanish conquistadors of Yucatán had many naborías, or indigenous slaves, including Maya women, some of them as young as fourteen. The sexual abuse of Maya slaves and servants became widespread. Many Maya naborías of Spanish conquistadors of Yucatán were forced to offer sexual favors to their masters and other soldiers.\(^3^8\) Several of Montejo’s captains became infamous for their sexual abuse of their naborías. Others apparently amassed “collections of the prettiest women that they could find, and rented them out to their fellow soldiers,” making for themselves a decent fortune.\(^3^9\) Native Maya accounts after the conquest lamented this sexual slavery: “Many village girls were forced to become
prostitutes. . . . and they forcibly took them. . . . These young girls did not understand the expectations of the foreigners: neither their Christianity, nor their demands. . . . These Spaniards brought shame when they came. . . . They lusted after the younger and the prettiest girls.”

The organized plundering of the most beautiful Maya women from the provinces of Tabasco and Yucatán began shortly after the Montejos gained control of the region. Young Indian women, especially those held in encomienda by the Montejos or their supporters, found themselves the victims of what can only be called an organized prostitution ring. According to witnesses, one of Francisco Montejo’s captains, Juan de Aguilar, trafficked in the most beautiful Indian women from all over Mesoamerica, forcing them to serve as prostitutes and concubines of Spanish conquerors of Yucatán. On one occasion, Aguilar purchased a pretty girl for a sack of cacao beans. Diego Martín later testified that Alonso López admitted that he gave these pretty girls to others to use as they pleased and in his various trips to Campeche “gave these girls to whomever he wanted.”

Landa was right later to blame much of the conquest’s sexual brutality on Alonso López. It was common knowledge during the conquest that López rounded up hundreds of girls and sent them to Francisco Montejo. Others claimed that the Indians of their encomiendas complained incessantly about López’s confiscation of the most beautiful Indian women. According to other testimonies, the cacique and Indians of Tamulte (an encomienda belonging to the adelantado) attempted to hide the town’s most beautiful girl. Apparently, López often sent his servant Diego Romero to towns to collect girls. More than fifty other young women faced a similar fate as Romero rounded them up and sent them to López in early 1541. López’s depredations did not affect only Indians. On other occasions he took pretty young women from Spaniards who held them legally as naborías. For example, Alonso de Eliva testified that he had lost an Indian couple stolen by López; the young Indian woman was beautiful and she and her husband were taken from his encomienda. López apparently sold the Indian man as a slave to a soldier in Campeche and gave the young woman to Diego de Aranda, a conquistador. Another Spaniard from Tabasco, Juan de Ayllón, reported that he had seen firsthand the abuse of several of his own young Maya naborías. López had taken two very pretty young naborías from him and sent them to his friends in Campeche. On a voyage to Campeche, Ayllón ran into the two girls, who looked badly abused, one apparently pregnant. The two Indian women grabbed at him and “cried profusely, begging to return to their own land.”

Regardless of pre-Hispanic Maya conceptions of sexual morality, things changed with the violent confrontations and forced sexual encoun-
urers of the conquest. Maya women were forcibly taken from their husbands and families, raped, and often kept as concubines or sold and traded like sexual slaves to other conquerors. Their Maya husbands, if not killed, would often flee or take another wife, never to see their previous spouse again. Maya girls as young as twelve were given to Spanish conquistadors as prizes and plunder throughout the conquest. Apparently, the dislocations and forced relocations of large numbers of Maya forced a change in Maya sexual mores, with many Mayas after the conquest marrying and having sexual relations at a younger age than before the arrival of the Europeans. This breakdown in the family structure of Maya families was paralleled by a breakdown in indigenous government and administration, which only partially recovered during the early colonial period. Once powerful regional Maya lords, or Halach Uinic, such as the Xiu lords of Mani, could not exercise the same power or control over the daily lives and sexual attitudes and activities of their Maya commoners. No longer, as Spanish observers later cited, could these Halach Uinic punish the Maya for unacceptable carnal sins. Instead of punishing Maya sodomites by burning them alive, as many Halach Uinic such as the Xiu lords at Mayapan had done to enforce codes of sexual conduct, Maya lords and their subordinate batabob found themselves removed from office and replaced by commoners or other Maya collaborators with the Spanish (see fig. 4). Many Spaniards saw the subsequent lack of punishment and vigilance by native lords as the main reason for an increase in sexual promiscuity and crimes of the flesh. The encomendero Diego Brizeño put it most succinctly in 1579: “Since this land has been conquered, they [the Maya] have begun to lose these good customs due to the lack of punishment that they receive for so many carnal sins evident today.” Other Spaniards echoed Brizeño’s assertion that the Maya’s sexual morality changed for the worse with the conquest. Íñigo Nieto went further: “Since there have been Spaniards in this land, [the Maya] have been losing the custom of punishing [these sins of the flesh], and there are more of these vices today than there have been for the last fifty years.” Whether or not Maya sexual promiscuity increased, the sexual encounters and collisions that resulted from the Spanish conquest changed many things for the Maya.

Sexual Encounters: Colonial Maya Sexuality

With the advent of forced sexual relations between the Europeans and Maya women, Maya conceptions of sex and sexuality began to change. The “sexual conquest” violently assaulted traditional Maya views of
morality and sexuality. Tellingly, the Maya books of Chilam Balam also connected the arrival of the Europeans with the advent of their suffering: “When misery came, when Christianity came from these many Christians who arrived with the true divinity, the True God. For this indeed was the beginning of misery for us, the beginning of tribute, the beginning of tithes, the beginning of strife over purse snatching, the beginning of strife with blowguns, the beginning of strife over promotions, the beginning of the creation of many factions.”53 The Chilam Balam of Chumayel also noted that the arrival of the Spaniards coincided with the advent of shameful lust and a loss of virtue: “The foreigners who have come here, have brought shame when they came. . . . Lust and sex are their priests that are coming to administer things here because of the foreigners.”54
Landa’s and other observers’ earlier images of the virtue of Maya women before the conquest conflict with the seventeenth-century view of general Maya sexual promiscuity found in the writings of Fray Diego López de Cogolludo. López de Cogolludo lamented the loss of this chastity and decency and the increase in adultery and rape: “Today when they should be better Christians, it is a sad thing to observe the lasciviousness that exists among them, and this is no doubt caused because they do not punish these sins with the rigor that they did before.”

The Spanish encomendero of the town of Muxupipp near Motul complained about the Maya’s sexual promiscuity and even outright perversion: “Among them there now exists an innumerable amount of sins of the flesh, incest, and above all many other evil customs.” The royal visitador of the Real Audiencia of Guatemala, don Diego García de Palacio, who had previously studied Maya customs in Yucatán, concluded in 1576 that “the most notorious things [observed] among them are their incest, sodomies, rapes, adulteries, and other crimes that occur commonly among these natives due to the fact that they live in large families together and do not make houses for their own families, but rather choose to remain with their parents and in-laws.”

The violence and rape that were part of the Spanish conquest and the introduction of a new system of morality and government no doubt changed the Maya’s concepts of sexuality and sexual morality. No longer could their caciques and batabob sentence commoners to death for adultery, rape, or sexual promiscuity. Instead they had to rely on the secular Spanish officials and judges, who were notoriously lax in their persecution of sexual offenses. Even the Holy Office of the Inquisition had no power to enforce sexual morality among the Maya. This was left to the bishops, their ecclesiastical courts of the Provisorato de Indios, and their officials, called vicarios, in Maya towns. The earliest bishops gave explicit instructions to the local ecclesiastical judges or vicarios concerning Maya sexual crimes and sexual morality. Fray Francisco de Toral, the first bishop, ordered that the local vicarios be especially vigilant in teaching the Maya about the sacraments of confession and matrimony and with the aid of interpreters have them confess their sins and lusts of the flesh. Many Spanish observers believed that this was to no avail, for Maya women had become more promiscuous. According to Giraldo Díaz de Alpuche, Maya women “are shameless and every day become greater whores.” Other Spaniards claimed that more than sixty years after the conquest, promiscuity among young Maya had grown such that many of the prettiest Maya women went to towns looking for Spaniards to fornicate with. Subsequent bishops continued to order their vicarios to be vigilant and
control the sexual morality of their Maya parishioners. As late as 1765, church authorities in the province revealed their continued preoccupation with the Maya’s sexual offenses when they ordered their parish priests to be especially careful about these vices and preach against them.  

Many Maya women apparently became sexually fascinated with the Spaniards and their African slaves. Colonial observers remarked that “the most beautiful of the young women quickly became ‘friends’ of the Spaniards, seeking them out in whatever town they might be.” Other Spaniards commented with disdain that these beautiful young women prostituted themselves out of a desire for sexual novelty. To have sex with a Spaniard, according to other colonial sources, was irresistible for young Maya women.

Initially, the early colonial Maya became fascinated not only with the Spaniards and their strange bodies, but also with their European livestock. The contact with unusual people and animals caused the Maya to experiment with new aspects of sexuality, much to the horror of the clergy. During the early contact period, many Mayas were caught experimenting sexually with the strange animals that the Spaniards had brought with them. By the 1560s, the Spanish system had attempted to conquer Maya sexuality, and several Maya were punished for bestiality. In one instance, Pedro Na, a fifteen-year-old Maya boy from the town of Mani, was caught committing bestiality with a Castilian chicken. On Monday, 11 January 1563, Juan Camal and his wife, Francisca Tun, while walking along the road, discovered Pedro Na seated on the ground with his pants open and his virile member in his hands. According to their later testimony, the hen was bleeding from its rear, and it was obvious that Pedro had just finished having carnal relations with the animal. During the trial, it became apparent that the boy had had carnal access with animals on many other occasions. He stated that he had no idea that his actions were wrong, pleading innocence and begging for mercy. The horrified Spanish prosecutor called his perversion “a sin so atrocious and abominable against God and nature” that it deserved the harshest penalty. On 30 January 1563, the judge issued his sentence, which was executed four days later: the boy was marched through the streets of Mérida with the dead hen tied around his neck. He was taken to the public square, where he was castrated, his genitals thrown into a bonfire with the dead hen. As this example illustrates, Spanish conceptions of sex and sexuality differed greatly from Maya conceptions. Although the Maya might have had a natural sexual curiosity to engage in sexual relations with animals, they soon came to realize that such conduct would be severely punished. The
violent Spanish reaction against an “abominable sin” would be repeated many times in response to other aspects of Yucatec Maya sexuality and sexual conduct. From the earliest contact with the Franciscan friars in the 1540s, to the frequent sermons and preaching of the secular parish clergy, the Maya’s different cultural concepts of sexual morality collided with the church’s message on the dangers of sex and sexuality.

Sexual Collisions: The Church’s Message on Sex and Sexuality

*Lust is the most debilitating of vices. . . . No evil attacks us earlier, pricks us more sharply, covers more territory, or drags more people to ruin.*

—Erasmus of Rotterdam, *Enchiridion Militis Christiani* (1503)

One of the first actions of the early friars was to stop all pre-Hispanic practices they considered “deviant or sexually promiscuous,” such as Maya concubinage and promiscuous sexual relations, especially those of the Maya nobility. The early friars viewed this effort as “civilizing” the Maya. Fray Bernardo de Lizana wrote in 1633 that the early Franciscans had the job of “domesticating [the Maya] and placing them in good order and civility, procuring clothes, because before they went around naked, and making them form orderly republics and towns.”69

The later missionary friars’ views differed greatly from the initial positive observations of precontact Maya sexual morality. The later friars viewed the Maya and their religion and culture as savage and inhuman. They remarked that their religion and culture broke all “divine and natural laws.”70 Especially in their observations of Maya sexual practices and marital relations, the Franciscans and Spanish authorities found practices that they wished to change.

As early as 1553 Spanish officials in the province issued *ordenanzas* that attempted to regulate Yucatec Maya sexual morality and marital relations. The royal *visitador* from the Audiencia of Guatemala issued a series of ordenanzas at the request of the Franciscans in an effort to reform and restrict Maya sexual practices. From that point onward, the Catholic Church and the Spanish authorities regulated and controlled Yucatec Maya sexuality, desire, and sexual relations. The ordenanzas of Tomás López Medel included several decrees concerning fornication and Maya marital relations. The royal official noted that, “even though the sacrament of matrimony was used among the natives of this province, they commit grave errors and abuses.”71 The decree ordered that “all of those who,
after having been baptized, have lived with many women are to mani-
ifest all of the women that they have to the bishop or the friars, who will
examine them to determine which should be the legitimate wife so that
they leave behind all the others.”

Anyone who continued to fornicate with many women or who refused
to leave his other wives would be punished with “one hundred lashes.”
The decrees also mandated a similar penalty for Mayas who committed
adultery. According to the decree, those caught committing adultery
would receive “one hundred lashes and have their hair shorn off.” Similarly,
those who continued to practice polygamy or adultery faced harsher
penalties. The ordenanzas also prohibited Maya caciques and principals
from keeping Maya women as slaves because the Spaniards believed that
these female slaves were kept as “lovers and concubines in great offense
of their legitimate wives and the sacrament of matrimony.” Fray Diego de
Landa mentioned that the caciques often engaged in sexual relations with
their female slaves, because they believed that it was “a man’s right to do
with his own property as his wished.”

Regardless of these prohibitions and the harsh penalties attached
to them, more than twenty years after the conquest the Spaniards and
the clergy began to observe an increase in sexual promiscuity among the
Yucatec Maya. For example, the Spaniard Juan Hernández, during the
trial of several Maya for sexual promiscuity, testified: “I have seen that
the natives here in this province commonly get married while they are still
young boys. . . . many marry at the age of ten or twelve, and they live a
married life with their wives; and it is common among them that they have
carnal access with women at a very early age, unlike the Spaniards.”

Other friars and parish clergy continued to decry what they viewed as
increasing Maya sexual depravity. Concerning the sexual misconduct of
Mayas in his own district, Fray Juan de Benavides wrote that many fled
his region “with their women, their own daughters, or the wives of other
Indians, secretly hiding them and living with them in sin. . . . They even
commit incest with their own daughters and close relatives. . . . Both I and
Fray Beleña have tried to put an end to these customs, remedying them
with severe punishments. . . but my efforts have not been sufficient to
uproot from them this evil and those of their incests.”

By the 1560s, the clergy had learned the Maya language, congregated
the Maya into orderly towns, forced them to wear clothing, and begun
instructing them in Spanish Christian concepts. One of the most important
goals of evangelization now became teaching Catholic sexual morality, a
task that fell to both the Franciscan order and the secular clergy of the
newly established bishopric.
The above definitions by the Spanish Dominican Fray Luis de Granada are perhaps the best summary of Spanish Catholic concepts of the dangers of sexuality, lust, and other sins related to sexual relations. Christian morality, as Louise Burkhart also has noted for the Franciscans’ work among the Nahua, was defined according to the Ten Commandments and the Seven Mortal Sins, “which were part of the basic doctrine that everyone was expected to memorize.”\(^77\) The official view of the Catholic clergy enforced by the Council of Trent in 1563 was that “virginity or celibacy is better and more conducive to happiness than marriage.”\(^78\)

Within this concept of sexuality, vaginal intercourse by a married couple remained the only sexual expression permitted. However, even this was viewed as shameful and only served the purpose of procreation. The clergy, in essence, hoped to inculcate in the Maya what they viewed as a “healthy abhorrence of sexual relations.” The clergy taught that the “less pleasure sustained during sex the better, and if it was possible one ought to experience no pleasure at all.”\(^79\) The friars also preached often on the virtue of virginity and the sinfulness of sexual activity outside of marriage.\(^80\)

Thus the most important message taught to the Maya was that celibacy was the most desirable state and that sex was sinful and dirty. The early friars also taught the Maya that the Catholic clergy were celibate and had to remain celibate, not only when conducting religious services, but throughout their lives. This concept of clerical celibacy conflicted with traditional Maya concepts of ritual celibacy, which, though required in certain religious ceremonies and feasts, was not a permanent characteristic of the Maya priesthood.\(^81\) At the same time, the early Franciscans arriving from Spain began in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century to stress in their sermons the newly invigorated doctrine of the Immaculate Conception of the Virgin Mary. It was Fray Diego de Landa himself who brought the first major image of the Virgin of the Immaculate Conception from Guatemala in 1558. Placed in the Franciscan monastery at Izamal, the carved wooden image of the Virgin immediately acquired a devoted following among the Maya from throughout Yucatán.\(^82\) The cult of the...
Virgin of Izamal was used by the friars to evangelize and instruct the Maya in the glories of virginity and the sins and dangers of sexual relations (see fig. 5).

On occasions throughout the year, the Franciscans would bring out and parade the image of the Virgin of Izamal. This beautiful, perpetual girl served as an example of the perfect state for all women and girls. Young Maya converts were taught to emulate the Virgin of Izamal’s chastity and modesty. The friars hoped that holding up this image as a role model would make young Maya women less likely to engage in promiscuous sexual relations with boys and men. For married Maya women, the Virgin also symbolized chastity and submission to husband and church. The Virgin also represented a nonsexual image of perfect motherhood. Maya women, then, were to see in the Virgin of Izamal the epitome of their socially mandated roles: chastity and obedience. The friars hoped by this means to make Maya women chaste and modest again, restricting sexual relations to marriage and never endangering the social order of their missions with sexual promiscuity or fornication. The Maya themselves record with wonder the arrival of the Virgin. They wrote that “it was at Izamal where the daughter of the true God, Lord of Heaven, descended, the Queen, the Virgin, the miraculous One. . . . It was she, the miraculous one, the merciful one, who was so declared here.” The message of the dangers of the sins of sexuality that the fathers taught them made their way even into many of the Maya’s clandestine books of Chilam Balam. These sins quickly permeated colonial Maya understanding of all things sexual.

The Colonial Clergy and Sexuality:
Attempts at Sexual Control

La mayor parte de los hombres, aunque alaban la virtud, siguen el vicio.
(The majority of men, though they praise virtue, follow vice.)
—Fray Luis de Granada (1565)

The clerical preoccupation with sexual morality and sexual practices is evident in the earliest doctrines and Christian confession manuals published in the Maya language. For instance, a surviving seventeenth-century confession manual translated into Yucatec Maya, *Confesionario breve para confesar a los indios*, placed a great deal of emphasis on discovering and making the Maya confess their sexual sins and other perversions. One of the longest sections of this confession manual deals with fornication.
Figure 5. Engraving of Nuestra Señora de Izamal (Franciscan Virgin of the Immaculate Conception brought from Guatemala on orders of Fray Diego de Landa, 1558). Drawing of plate in Fr. Bernardo de Lizana, *Devocionario de Nuestra Señora de Izamal y conquista espiritual de Yucatán*, ed. Rene Acuña (Mexico City, 1995 [1633]). Drawing by Argelia Segovia Liga
The priest or confessor is instructed to ask questions that followed a supposedly normal exchange between confessor and Maya confessant. For example:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Yanxin açipil ti hunpay chuplal} & \quad \text{[Have you fornicated with some woman?]}
\text{Haytulx tubaob} & \quad \text{[With how many?]}
\text{Hay tenhi ti hun tulicunx tihuntuli} & \quad \text{[How many times with one and with the other?]}
\text{Yan uxibil cucli} & \quad \text{[Did she have a husband?]}
\text{A uenelob xin} & \quad \text{[Are they your relatives?]}
\text{Bicx auonelil ti} & \quad \text{[How are they related to you?]}
\text{Yonelob xin a chuplil} & \quad \text{[Are they relatives of your wife?]}
\text{Yanxin a dziboltic hunpay chuplal} & \quad \text{[Have you desired any woman?]}
\text{Haytulx tubaob} & \quad \text{[How many?]}
\text{Haytenhi a dzibolticob} & \quad \text{[How many times have you desired them?]}
\text{Yanhi ua auolticupil tiob cucli} & \quad \text{[Did you have the will to fornicate with them?]}
\text{Yanxin abaxtic aba} & \quad \text{[Have you touched yourself dishonestly?]}
\end{align*}
\]

The Spanish clergy’s preoccupation with sexual deviance and sexual morality is evident not only in this confession manual but also in many of the words that they elicited from their Maya informants for their earliest dictionaries. For instance, in many of the Franciscan dictionary entries that dealt with sex and sexuality, the clergy attached the Maya keban to words for sexual practices and sexual positions (fig. 6). The clergy used the word keban, which meant “a sad or miserable thing,” to roughly translate the Spanish pecado (sin). The Catholic Christian relationship between sex and sin was thereby perpetuated by the later friars’ teachings. Just as Burkhart noted for the Franciscans’ missionary efforts among the Nahuatl-speaking natives of central New Spain, the Yucatán missionary’s “aim was translation, not linguistic investigation.”

As table 2 and many other examples of Maya terms for sexual positions and sexual acts illustrate, the Franciscan friars associated Maya sexuality and sexual practices with sinfulness and dirtiness. The friars began to record common Maya sayings, which also show the Spaniards’ view of the increase in Maya sexual promiscuity. One such common phrase was Baxalech choo u baxalech kuch, which meant “You are the plaything of mice and buzzards.” The friars glossed this phrase as “You are an evil woman who gives herself to everyone and everyone comes to you like rodents go
Figure 6. Maya Calepino de Motul of Fray Antonio de Ciudad Real, entry dealing with the Maya term *keban*, meaning roughly “sin.” Author’s photograph of fol. 243 from *Calepino de Motul: Diccionario maya-español*, vol. 1 (Mexico City, 1995), 417.
to bread and buzzards to putrid flesh.” In this way, they attempted to inculcate a horror of sexual promiscuity and lasciviousness. Their conceptions came from the Christian Catholic view of sexuality dictated by the Council of Trent in 1563.

The Maya, however, had a preconquest sexual morality that did not view sex as inherently evil. Maya conceptions defined and placed sexual pleasure and sexual relations within certain constructs and relationships that depended on one’s social class and one’s status in society. Whereas Maya commoners were only allowed to enjoy sexual relations within the confines of a monogamous marriage, the Maya nobility and caciques were allowed during the precontact period to engage in and enjoy sexual relations with many wives and with many of their female slaves and servants. Even during the colonial period, the Maya nobility continued to claim sexual prerogatives over many women, even including wives of their commoners. For instance, in 1569 the Maya nobleman and governor from the region of the town of Tabi tried to force a commoner’s wife to have sex with him. According to the commoner: “The worst thing that he did was that he came into my house four times, trying to take my wife by force in order to sow sin [fornicate] with her. He desired this, but he did not fulfill his desire. This is what don Jorge Xiu did.” As this case illustrates, with the full force of Spanish colonial society and the church on their side, Maya commoners could thwart the continued prerogatives and sexual advances of the Maya nobility. During the later colonial period, Maya women too were able to use the Spanish system to protect themselves from lascivious Maya noblemen and even unwanted sexual advances from Spaniards.

Colonial Realities: Sexual Immorality among the Clergy

Attempts to correct abuses and reform the clergy were the main preoccupations of the final session of the Council of Trent (1562–63). Efforts to control the morality and inhibit and punish the sexual immorality of parish clergy were made in several major Mexican provincial councils and three separate diocesan synods in the bishopric of Yucatán. Apparently, as successive bishops proclaimed, there was a problem with enforcing celibacy and continence among the clergy (especially the secular parish clergy).

All of the church’s efforts at reform appear to have been in vain. Especially in later colonial Yucatán, sexual immorality among the higher clergy appears to have been commonplace. For example, as late as 1700 a priest of the cathedral, Gaspar Joseph Rodríguez, complained that the
entire ecclesiastical membership of the cathedral chapter engaged in sexually immoral behavior. He wrote to the Crown:

Many of the priests and even the prebendados have illicit relationships with women, and they even have children by them. . . . The Dean of the Chapter does not go to the meetings, instead he screws around with four girls and gives them his pensions as “dowries.” . . . the Archdean also has a lover with whom he fornicates. . . . The Maestroescuela also has a lover with whom he fornicates, a mestizo woman named Josefa Montalvo, whom he offered as a whore informally to a member of the secular cabildo. They all fornicate with mestizas and indias. . . . but I should tell no more so as not to offend Your Majesty’s chaste ears.93

If this is an accurate image of the higher, more educated clergy in Mérida, what could one expect from the undereducated and often illiterate clergy who served in the Maya parishes and guardianías?
Renewed Sexual Encounters and Collisions:
The Priests/Confessors and the Maya

While he was confessing me in his room[,] . . . he reached out under my garment
and groped my breasts and said to me, “You are very pretty. . . . I think I should
like to see your breasts. . . . They are quite fine indeed. . . .” Then, being the first
time that I had been to confession, I fled his room in horror and have never con-
fessed since that day.
—María May, nineteen-year-old Maya woman from the village of Peto
(1589)

Since the Fourth Lateran Council of 1215, the Catholic Church has empha-
sized the obligation of every Christian of both sexes to confess before the
local priest at least once a year. Moreover, from the decrees of the Council
of Trent (1553–63) onward, confession became mandatory on certain feast
days of precept. The council decreed that “for those who after baptism
have fallen into sin, the Sacrament of Penance is as necessary unto salva-
tion as is baptism itself for those who have not yet been regenerated.” In
1585, the Catholic Church in Mexico went a step forward when the Third
Mexican Provincial Council required parish priests to keep a book for this
purpose, and every year during Lent they had to enter into it the names
of those who had come to confession as well as report those who did
not confess. This procedure was required by most synods. The provin-
cial council also decreed which holy days of precept were to be observed
by the indigenous people in their parishes. In colonial Yucatán, Maya
parishioners had to appear and confess before their priest on four separate
occasions each canonical year according to the bishopric’s first synod in
1563. These four mandatory confessions were to occur during the Feast
at Easter, Corpus Christi, the Feast of the Patron Saint of the village, and
one other feast day. In other words, the Maya were required by law to
be interrogated regularly about their sexual conduct by their parish priests
and Franciscan friars in the intimacy of the confessional. This quickly
enabled the Maya to understand the clergy’s obsession with the intimate
details of their sexual lives. Many Mayas soon realized that the act of
confession could be a powerful tool in their dealings with each other and
with their parish clergy.

Moreover, for the Spanish Catholic Church during the colonial period,
the single most abhorrent crime that a clergyman could commit was solici-
tación, or solicitation ad turbia intra confessionem. According to medi-
eval Spanish law, the clerical crime of soliciting sex in the confessional
was tantamount to heresy and a grievous sin, considered one of the worst
committed against the majesty of God. The old Castilian law of the Siete
Partidas, on which many of the laws of the Indies were based, declared that “ecclesiastics are always bound to live in a chaste manner, especially after they have taken holy orders.” Any clergyman who solicited sex in the confessional or who engaged in open fornication would be removed from his parish. The Holy Office of the Inquisition also issued several edicts specifically denouncing the sin of solicitation and requiring all Christians to denounce any cases of solicitation to their local commissary of the Inquisition. The Inquisition and church authorities also attempted to regulate the act of confession by mandating the use of a formal enclosed “confessional,” which would physically separate the confessor from the person confessing. Mindful of the dangers and temptations that existed for the solicitation of sex during confessions, the Council of Trent and numerous church councils in New Spain and its bishoprics attempted to require the use of enclosed confessionals. However, as late as the seventeenth century, even the illustrations in colonial Mexican confessionarios showed priests confessing penitents who openly knelt before them (see fig. 7a). This type of “open” confessional often led to both temptations and abuses of penitents (see fig. 7b). In many cases in colonial Yucatán, this type of confessional, without any enclosures separating the penitent from the confessor, remained common late into the eighteenth century (see fig. 8).
Figure 8. Eighteenth-century open-front confessional from the Maya convent church at Mani. Photograph by the author
Technically in canon law, solicitation was the use of the sacrament of penance, either directly or indirectly, to draw others into sins of lust. In the province of Yucatán and in New Spain in general, the term solicitation took on a wider meaning and a broader definition. It came to be associated with any attempt to initiate sexual contact between a priest or confessor and anyone else before, during, or after a confession. The actual solicitation of sex in the confessional was not absolutely necessary to try a priest for solicitation. The actual act of soliciting sex or engaging in sexual relations could take place before or after a confession either in the church, the priest’s private dwelling, or any other place close to or attached to the church or convent. The mere fact that the soliciting priest was also a licensed confessor made any sexual overture or act of the priest a sin against the sacrament of penance and an abuse of office.

The seriousness of an accusation of solicitation of sex in the confessional made such charges a powerful weapon for the Maya in battles against their parish priests. In many instances, the Maya used their knowledge of their priests’ and friars’ illicit sexual relations. They had learned well the lessons that the priests and friars had taught them about sexuality and sexual perversion, and they used these lessons to attack their clergymen when they had no other means of resistance. For example, in one instance in 1774 an anonymous Maya wrote a long petition denouncing the hypocrisy of the local parish priests. The Maya denounced them for sexual depravity, stating:

I, the informer of the truth, tell you what you should know about Father Torres, Father Díaz, squad corporal, Father Granado, sergeant, and Father Maldonado. They say false baptism, false confession, false last rites, and false mass. Nor does the True God descend in the host when they say mass, because they have stiff penises. Every day all they think of is intercourse with their mistresses. In the morning their hands smell bad from playing with their mistresses. Father Torres only plays with the vagina of that ugly black devil Rita. He whose hand is disabled does not have a disabled penis. It is said that he has up to four children by this black devil. Likewise, Father Díaz, squad corporal, has a woman from Bolonchen called Antonia Alvarado, whose vagina he repeatedly penetrates before the whole community, and Father Granado bruises Manuela Pacheco’s vagina all night. Father Maldonado has just finished fornicating with everyone in his jurisdiction and has now come here to carry out his fornication. The whole community knows this. When Father Maldonado makes his weekly visit, a woman from Pencuyut named Fabiana Gómez pro-
vides him with her vagina. Only the Priests are allowed to fornicate without so much as a word about it. If a good commoner does that, the priest always punishes him immediately. But look at the priests’ excessive fornication, putting their hands on these whores’ vaginas, even saying mass like this. God willing, when the English come may they not be fornicators equal to these priests, who only lack carnal acts with man’s arses. God willing that smallpox be rubbed into their penis heads. Amen. I, the Informer of the truth.111

This petition is illustrative of the Maya’s abilities to turn the Catholic teachings on the immorality of sexual behavior against their own priests and friars. In this petition, the author, no doubt a Maya nobleman, subtly challenges the clergy’s teachings against fornication and polygamy. His use of the phrase “If a good commoner does that” shows that he is trying to relate and identify himself as a common Maya, but his education and erudition betray him as a member of the noble class that was most affected by Franciscan and clerical prohibitions of polygamy and fornication. As Sigal has noted, this petitioner reveals quite a bit about Spanish colonialism and the impact of the sexual conquest.112 This petition is also a brilliant act of Maya resistance against the clergy. The author achieved his desired effect of shocking the ecclesiastical authorities. The official of the Inquisition who translated the document was so offended that he added his own opinion to the translation saying that the accusations were “scathing, audacious, and grossly excessive,” since he argued that it was well known that the clergy treated the Maya with “respect and veneration.”113 The anonymous Maya petitioner successfully used his knowledge of Spanish sexual morality to attack his parish priests: during the pastoral visitation of the region several of the friars and priests mentioned in this petition were removed and tried for solicitation.114

In one of the earliest cases against a clergyman for soliciting sex in the confessional, a similar Maya petition complained that the parish priest and vicario Andrés Mexía solicited sex in the confessional. According to the Maya officials of the town of Ekpedz, “While [Mexía] gives confession to women, he says, ‘If you do not give yourself to me, I will not give you confession.’ This is how he abuses the women. He will not give them confession unless the women go to him. Unless the women fornicate with him. This is the whole truth about why the women are so upset.”115

Initially, Mexía was removed, but after a long trial he was eventually reinstated in the Peto region from 1582 to 1589.116 Mexía claimed that the Maya were quick to lie under oath and often committed perjury. He stated before the inquisitors that the Maya “very easily commit perjury
and . . . ordinarily get drunk and are easy to convince and persuade to give testimony against someone contrary to the truth. . . . They are out to see whom they can take advantage of and for any small occasion or interest they contradict themselves [make false declarations].”\textsuperscript{117} Apparently, the Inquisition officials believed Mexía’s arguments. The Maya officials from the local town of Tetzal quickly realized that the reinstated Mexía might harbor a grudge against them. Showing the Maya’s cunning and understanding of the reality of colonialism, the town government of Tetzal wrote a letter of apology to the Inquisition asking for Mexía’s forgiveness and blaming the scandal on the gossip of Maya women. Using Spanish ideas of Christian virtue, they wrote: “Because of Christianity we gave up our anger with the padre and that which we previously said about him. Nor do we ask anything of him. Nor do we have anything else to say about it, because it is all over. We tell the truth. We will remember none of it a second time, because we know nothing about it except for tale-telling and women’s gossip.”\textsuperscript{118}

It was not long, however, before the Maya used another accusation of solicitation of sex in the confessional against Padre Mexía. In late March 1589, a group of Maya women from the Peto region denounced Mexía again for sexually abusing them in the confessional.\textsuperscript{119} Once more, Mexía argued that they held animosity against him, but he was not as successful this second time.\textsuperscript{120} Eventually condemned, Mexía was sentenced to the perpetual privation of confessing women as well as to banishment from the province for two years and a fine of one hundred pesos.\textsuperscript{121}

In another case, from 1599, the Maya again denounced sexual impropriety in the confessional to defend themselves against an abusive Franciscan friar. A group of Maya women from the towns of Motul and Cacalchen denounced their friar for soliciting sex in the confessional and for molesting them while they confessed. Through the interpretation of Fray Julián de Quartas, four young Maya women denounced their friar to the Franciscan provincial Fray Alonso de Río Frío.\textsuperscript{122} They accused Fray Pedro de Vergara of soliciting sexual relations from them and ultimately raping them during their confessions. According to Ana Kuk, a Maya woman from Motul, Vergara had said “lascivious words to her and shown her his penis after which she grew saddened and left without confessing.”\textsuperscript{123} Beatriz Dzib, also from the town of Motul, accused Vergara of soliciting her during confession. She claimed that Vergara “placed his hands on her breasts and tried to make her touch his penis.”\textsuperscript{124} In the town of Cacalchen, however, María Cocom made the most damning allegations, alleging that Vergara made her sit between his legs before him while he “touched her breasts and forced her to touch his penis.”\textsuperscript{125} When the girl
began to cry, the friar reportedly forced her to her knees and raped her, telling her when he finished that “she should not tell anyone about what had happened there.”

According to other information gathered later, Vergara had also raped Maya women in other towns. More petitions from Maya women and men arrived. The scandalized provincial of the Franciscan order wrote that after having been warned the friar still “had not changed his ways, but rather continued these vile actions and did other things worthy of punishment.” Based on the Mayas’ petitions and testimony, the provincial removed the friar. However, by October 1600 Fray Miguel López, a Franciscan official who visited the province, heard of the case and reviewed it. He discovered that many of the husbands of the same Maya women who denounced Vergara previously had been punished by him for the crime of idolatry. Fray Miguel wrote that the Inquisition should reconsider the case:

These Maya [who testified against Vergara] are less than firmly planted in the faith, and they have proceeded to denounce Fray Pedro de Vergara out of desire for revenge, since they had ample cause to hold hatred for him, because as the guardián of their convent and as a translator of their language he had persecuted them for their idolatries with all of the care and diligence necessary of his office, and in punishing them he used harsh measures and cruelty and because of his extirpation of idolatry there has not been a single convent in which the Indians have not raised severe complaints against him for his excessive cruelty, and even now during the present Chapter meeting of our order I have received verbal petitions from the Indians of several villages where he has never yet served as guardián not because he has done anything, but rather because out of their fear and knowing the fame of his cruelty they hoped that he would not be assigned to their guardiánía. . . . For these reasons I am sure that the Indians referred to in this case have the same hatred for him since he was the translator in various cases against idolatry in their town. . . . Thus I am of the opinion that we delay any punishment for some time until we can be sure that if any of the witnesses in this case wish for revenge they will not be able to gain it in this manner.

The 1609 case against the parish priest Cristóbal de Valencia discussed at the beginning of this essay is another typical case in which the Maya used denunciations of sexual impropriety against a clergyman who had punished them for their own excesses. Clemente Ek was not the only one who denounced Padre Valencia. More than one hundred other Maya
gave depositions against the priest. One of these witnesses was Pablo Chan, a resident of the town of Hoctun. According to Chan, Valencia, “with a diabolical soul and unworthy of the ministry and office of a priest, called the said Indian one day and ordered him to put his virile member into his mouth and that the said Indian placed his virile member into the mouth of the accused and he took his own member into his hands and he played with it until he spilled his own natural seed.”

Valencia, in his own defense, argued similarly that Pablo Chan, Clemente Ek, and many of the other Maya witnesses used their denunciations to take revenge against him. He stated “that the natives give this false testimony against him because he had punished them for their own crimes against the faith and their idolatries and drunkenness that they engage in frequently, and for this reason they declare these falsehoods against him.” As in the case against Fray Pedro de Vergara, the Maya apparently used accusations of sexual impropriety to rid themselves of a repressive clergyman. During the same period, the bishop of Yucatán stated that the Maya often lied and testified falsely against their clergymen. In a letter to the Crown, he wrote: “I, inquiring about the matter, discover that the Indians come with lies because they are obligated to go and hear mass or the doctrine, or that proceedings for some crime or sin against the faith are brought against them.” More important than whether the Mayas told lies or the truth is that their accusations proved effective in removing their clergymen, at least for the duration of the trial. As these and many other cases show (see table 3 in the appendix), many Mayas may have used denunciations of solicitation to remove priests and friars who punished or abused them for what they viewed as the Mayas’ own sins. Accusations of solicitation empowered Maya men to take revenge against the repressive measures of clergy seeking to extirpate idolatry. Maya women also empowered themselves by taking the initiative and denouncing their parish priests or friars for sexual advances in the confessional or in the church.

These accusations also allowed Maya women to protect themselves from the abuse of a jealous husband. For example, two Maya women from the Peto region denounced their interim parish priest, Bachiller Antonio Ramón de La Cueva, in 1730 for the crime of solicitation ad turpia intra confessionem. Fearful that their husbands might discover that they were not virgins when they married, they blamed their lost virginity on a parish priest well known for exploiting his parishioners. Whether or not they were actually raped in the confessional, the Maya women used the accusation as a shield against their jealous husbands. In order to minimize their own public shame, the two women intelligently asked a second Spanish confessor to denounce the priest for them. Another Maya woman, María
Uxul, brought a similar case against the assistant parish priest of the town of Mama, Bachiller Félix de Malavar, in the same year.\textsuperscript{136} Apparently, her husband also had abused her for suspected infidelity.

In many other cases, Maya men used similar claims about priests and Maya women to take revenge for abuses committed against them. For example, in 1780 Félix Cocom, the Maya \textit{maestro de capilla} of the town of Uman, denounced his own parish priest Bachiller Luis Antonio de Echazarreta for sexual misconduct and solicitation.\textsuperscript{137} According to later testimony, the priest not only solicited sex during confession, he also mistreated young pregnant Maya women. Apparently, he frequently attacked unwed mothers or pregnant Maya women by yelling at them: “Come here you whores, you little pigs, mules of the devil that is what you are, slaves of the devil’s fornication, come and tell me who are the fathers of the bastard children that you have in your womb.”\textsuperscript{138} Padre Echazarreta’s offenses did not stop with insults. Many of the younger Maya women who attempted to marry, such as Francisca Cauiche, testified that the priest had raped them during their marriage talks and confessions while they resided in the church.\textsuperscript{139} Apparently, while they stayed in the church at night the priest called them to his room. Francisca Cauiche later testified that after dinner one night she was summoned to his quarters by the priest’s sister doña Ignacia, who dragged her by her arms and locked her in the priest’s room.\textsuperscript{140} Father Echazarreta then pulled her forcibly to the bed and threatened her, “If you do not have carnal relations with me I will not marry you.” Francisca kicked and resisted and told him, “My Lord, I cannot have relations with you because you are Christ on earth!” The priest replied: “My daughter, I have permission and a license to have relations with anyone, even a young virgin like you. . . . I should be the first to taste of the fruits that will soon belong to those \textit{cabrones}. Besides if you have any trouble in the future with your husband because of this just come to me and tell me so I can punish him.”\textsuperscript{141} According to other witnesses, the parish priest apparently molested all of the girls who came to him for marriage instruction and confession.\textsuperscript{142} In his initial denunciation, Félix Cocom argued that Father Echazarreta’s sexual scandals were so horrendous that they set a bad example for the entire town. Cocom appealed to Catholic fears of public scandal when he wrote sarcastically in his petition: “All of this, My Lord, appears upon seeing it to cause me many sins, because if a Spiritual Padre can do and consent to these things in his Holy Convent, what will I not do with this bad example?”\textsuperscript{143}

Cocom’s denunciation was motivated less by altruistic interest in protecting the Maya women of his town than by personal revenge. Padre Echazarreta had had him whipped and ordered the Maya \textit{fiscales} to smear
human excrement in his mouth.144 Apparently, this punishment was for appearing drunk in public and swearing at the priest.145 The Maya women involved in this case were at first reluctant to press the issue, but Cocom’s denunciation forced them to testify. Although the priest’s sexual abuse of the women was a fact, it was not the motivating factor in his denunciation. In fact, two of the women who were molested by the priest received much grief from their husbands for participating in the case.146 The Maya women and one Spanish woman, whom the priest also molested, would have preferred to keep their molestation a secret. However, the denunciation of sexual impropriety proved an irresistible weapon for Félix Cocom and for his fellow members of the Uman town council, angered at Echazarreta’s failure to pay them or feed the town employees for work conducted on the church.147 In the end, the authorities removed the priest from his parish, not for his host of abuses and extortions, but rather for his few sexual indiscretions.

A large corpus of similar trials for clerical solicitation exists. The few examples given here illustrate how the Maya used denunciations of sexual abuse to rid themselves of clergymen who abused and punished them for their own supposed crimes against the Catholic faith.148 Although sexual abuse almost certainly did occur in most of these cases, it was not until the Maya found themselves abused in other ways that they used the accusations of sexual impropriety against their clergymen. In most cases, the Maya accepted and even covered up the sexual indiscretions of their clergymen.149 As long as the clergy did not engage in open violation of traditional Maya concepts of celibacy during the conducting of religious rituals (such as the mass, confession, baptism), the Maya would ignore their sexual impropriety. But if a clergyman attempted to punish the Maya of his parish too rigorously for their traditional religious practices or for what he viewed as their sexual immorality, the Maya would complain about the priest’s hypocrisy. When local priests enforced the Spanish Catholic code of sexual morality, the Maya complained about the “priests’ excessive fornication,” as they did in the anonymous 1774 petition reproduced above. In many instances, the accusation of sexual immorality was the last of many attempts to remove abusive clerics. In the cases against Andrés Mexía and Luis Antonio de Echazarreta, a long series of complaints of economic and labor abuse preceded denunciations for solicitation. However, the Spanish authorities, themselves complicit in Mexía’s and Echazarreta’s corruption and extortion of the Maya, turned deaf ears to their complaints. Only after the Holy Office of the Inquisition got involved in solicitation cases did the Maya manage to remove abusive priests.
The Colonial Maya and the Sexual Conquest: Who Conquered Whom?

The Maya response to the “sexual conquest” illustrates the ability of a militarily conquered people to exploit every weakness in the colonial system to preserve the traditional culture. The Maya who denounced their priests skillfully used the Spaniards’ contradictory worlds of sexual morality against them. If we believe the testimonies of the Mayas who denounced their parish priests as pedophiles or sexual abusers, the picture we gain is one of rampant sexual promiscuity among the clergy. Although many of the testimonies may have been exaggerated, there is evidence of the clergy’s lax morality in the frontier province of Yucatán. To argue that the Maya used accusations of sexual abuse in political and cultural self-defense is not to deny that abuse took place with alarming frequency throughout the colonial era. Maya testimony suggests a pattern of widespread sexual abuse, which appears to continue past independence in the nineteenth century. This leads to the question of whether the Maya accusations are evidence of sexual deviance or brilliant use of Catholic sexual preoccupations and conceptions against the clergy. This question, however, ignores the most important arena of sexual conflict, where traditional Mayan sexuality collided with the contradictory Spanish worlds of morality and lasciviousness. In these encounters, sexually abused Mayas found themselves used as political weapons against the colonial system by Maya lords who resented their loss of sexual prerogatives.

In the end, one is left with the lingering and unanswerable question of who actually won the “sexual conquest.” Perhaps the best way to explore this question is with Guido Ruggiero’s metaphor of European sexual worlds. The first world of Spanish Catholic morality, with its virtues of chastity and virginity, clearly failed to conquer the Spanish, much less the Maya. The second world of Spanish lasciviousness found itself checked by the first world and also failed to “conquer” the Maya. At the same time, the Maya world of pre-Columbian sexuality found itself under assault by both worlds of Spanish sexual mores. In this culturally complex universe of sexual worlds there were neither winners nor losers, only an intermingling, colliding, and chaotic brew of clashing cultures that was the colonial Yucatán. The wreckage of worlds colliding, reforming, and colliding again is the best metaphor for the creation of a unique postconquest Maya culture that successfully protected itself from both the Spaniards’ sexual aggression and their alien concepts of Catholic sexual morality, even as the conflict itself transformed Maya traditions.
### Appendix

#### Table 3. Sample cases of clerical solicitation in the diocese of Yucatán, 1578–1808

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Accused Clergyman</th>
<th>Crime</th>
<th>Accuser</th>
<th>Incident</th>
<th>Outcome</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1578</td>
<td>Andres Mexía, cleric [Yalcon, Ekpedz, Tetzal, others]</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>Maya cabildo and numerous Maya women from towns of Ekpedz and Tetzal</td>
<td>solicitation of sex and sexual relations in confessional</td>
<td>temporary removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1580</td>
<td>Various clergymen</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>Maya women and men</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in confessional</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1580</td>
<td>Fray Juan de Santanella, Franciscan</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>Maya women, town government</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in confessional, sexual molestation</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1582</td>
<td>Fray Pedro Núñez, Franciscan</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>Various Maya women</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in confessional, molestation</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1589</td>
<td>Andrés Mexía, cleric [Calotmul, Peto]</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>Maya women and cabildos of towns of Peto and Calotmul</td>
<td>solicitation of sex and rape in the confessional</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1599</td>
<td>Fray Pedro de Vergara, Franciscan [Motul]</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>Maya women from the towns of Motul and Cacalchen</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional, rape, molestation</td>
<td>temporary removal, reinstatement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Accused Clergyman</td>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>Accuser</td>
<td>Incident</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
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<tr>
<td>1600</td>
<td>Bachiller Andrés Fernández de Castro, cleric</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>several Spanish and Maya women</td>
<td>solicitation of sex during confession</td>
<td>temporary removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1605</td>
<td>Diego de La Camara, cleric</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>Maya women</td>
<td>solicitation of sex during confession</td>
<td>temporary removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1610</td>
<td>Cristóbal de Valencia, cleric</td>
<td>solicitation  <em>ad turpia intra confessionem, pecados contra natura, actos nefandos</em></td>
<td>Maya men and boys from Hocaba, Sanlahcat, Hoctun</td>
<td>solicitation of sex during confession, homosexual acts, forced oral sex</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1613</td>
<td>Fray Cristóbal de Moreno, Franciscan [Campeche]</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>Maya women</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1621</td>
<td>Fray Francisco Gutiérrez, Franciscan</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>Maya women</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1624</td>
<td>Fray Julian Orbita, Franciscan</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>Maya and Spanish women</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1730</td>
<td>Bachiller Antonio Ramón de La Cueva, cleric</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>Bernardino Chan, Thomasa Huchim</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Accused Clergyman</td>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>Accuser</td>
<td>Incident</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
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<tr>
<td>1730</td>
<td>Bachiller don Félix de Malaver, cleric</td>
<td>solicitation ad turpia intra confessionem</td>
<td>Cecilia Uxul (Mama)</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1750</td>
<td>Bachiller Alfonso Pérez, cleric</td>
<td>solicitation ad turpia intra confessionem</td>
<td>Maya women</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1751</td>
<td>Fray Francisco Guzmán, Franciscan</td>
<td>solicitation ad turpia intra confessionem</td>
<td>Maya women</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1757</td>
<td>Bachiller Mateo González, cleric</td>
<td>solicitation ad turpia intra confessionem</td>
<td>Maya, mulatta, and Spanish women</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1777</td>
<td>Fray Francisco Guzmán, Franciscan [repeat offender]</td>
<td>solicitation ad turpia intra confessionem</td>
<td>Marcela de Campos, other women</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional, assault</td>
<td>died during trial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1780</td>
<td>Luis Antonio de Achazarreta, cleric</td>
<td>solicitation ad turpia intra confessionem, fornicación, other crimes</td>
<td>Francisca Cauiche, Manuela Pacheco, Félix Cocom</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in confessional, sexual misconduct</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1780</td>
<td>Fray Pedro Ortega, Franciscan</td>
<td>solicitation ad turpia intra confessionem</td>
<td>Spanish, mestiza women</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1781</td>
<td>José Manzanilla, cleric</td>
<td>solicitation ad turpia intra confessionem</td>
<td>Maya, mulatta, and Spanish women</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional</td>
<td>died during trial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Accused, Clergyman</td>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>Accuser</td>
<td>Incident</td>
<td>Outcome</td>
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<tr>
<td>1785</td>
<td>Pablo Raymondi, Italian cleric</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>Various, Maya and mestiza women</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1794</td>
<td>Bachiller Julián Quijano, cleric [Bacalar]</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem, sodomia, acto nefando</em></td>
<td>Francisco Uicab</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional, sodomy, homosexual acts</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1795</td>
<td>Antonio Pacheco, cleric</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>Micaela Dzib</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional</td>
<td>died during trial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1797</td>
<td>Juan Dionisio Frasqui, cleric</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>Maya women</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1798</td>
<td>Bachiller José Rafael Jiménez, cleric [Tixkokob]</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>María Isabel Torralbo, mestiza</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional</td>
<td>permanent removal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1808</td>
<td>Fray Lorenzo de Ávila, Franciscan</td>
<td>solicitation <em>ad turpia intra confessionem</em></td>
<td>María Encarnación</td>
<td>solicitation of sex in the confessional</td>
<td>false accusation</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 9. Petition from Maya batab and cabildo officials from the town of Ekpedz in protest against their priest and vicar, Padre Andrés Mexía (1589)
Figure 10. Petition from Maya batab and cabildo officials from the Maya town of Tixhualatun, complaining about sexual abuse from their parish priest, Andrés Mexía (1589)
Notes

Spanish spellings have been modernized throughout, and, unless otherwise noted, all translations are mine.

1 “Petición en lengua maya de Clemente Ek y Francisco Ek su padre contra el cura beneficiado del pueblo de Hocaba, Cristóbal de Valencia por varias cosas indecentes” (6 July 1609), Archivo General de la Nación (hereafter AGN), Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 472, expediente 5, fols. 1r–3r.
2 AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 472, expediente 5, fol. 2v.
3 “Testimonio y declaración de Clemente Ek en contra de su cura Cristóbal de Valencia” (6 July 1609), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 472, expediente 5, fol. 10r.
4 Ibid., fols. 10r–10v.
5 “Mandamiento de prisión contra Padre Cristóbal de Valencia hecha por su paternidad Fr. Fernando de Nava, comisario del Santo Oficio” (6 July 1609), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 472, expediente 5, fols. 4r–4v. As the commissary’s reaction illustrates, the ecclesiastical authorities were especially adamant about rooting out “sodomy,” the “nefarious act,” or any type of homosexual relations between clergymen and parishioners. For a complete study of Christian intolerance of and historical views on homosexuality, see David F. Greenberg and Marcia H. Bystryn, “Christian Intolerance of Homo-

6 Especially damning evidence from several of Padre Valencia’s younger male parish assistants (such as his sacristans and other acolytes) pointed to his abuse of small children. For several examples, see “Testimonio de Pablo Chan, indio vecino del pueblo de Hocutun, en contra de los abusos de Padre Cristóbal de Valencia” (July 1609), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 472, expediente 5, 5 fols. See also “Denuncia de Pedro Couoh de Sahcaba, sacristán del dicho pueblo, en contra de los abusos de Padre Cristóbal de Valencia” (July 1609), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 472, expediente 5, 6 fols.

7 For a few of the more than one hundred denunciations, see “Testimonio y declaración de Juan May, vecino de Tixpehual, contra Padre Cristóbal de Valencia” (July 1609), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 472, expediente 5, fols. 11v–13r; see also “Presentación de capítulos y cargas en contra del padre Cristóbal de Valencia hecha por los indios del pueblo de Hocabá” (August 1609), legajo 472, expediente 5, fols. 13v–17r; and “Petición del cacique y oficiales del pueblo de Xocchel en contra de su cura Padre Cristóbal de Valencia” (July 1609), legajo 472, expediente 5, fols. 17r–32r.

8 According to canon law and tradition, parish priests who had concubines or engaged in illicit sex had to be warned three times by the local bishop before he could remove them from office. For specific examples of Spanish custom and law concerning the sexual immorality of clergy, see the statutes of the Siete Partidas in *The Medieval Church: The World of Clerics and Laymen*, vol. 1 of *Las Siete Partidas*, trans. Samuel Parsons Scott, ed. Robert I. Burns, S.J. (Philadelphia, 2001), 100–103. See also the decrees concerning sexual offenses, clerical celibacy, and misconduct in the Council of Trent’s proceedings; Ignacio López de Ayala, *El sacrosanto y ecuménico concilio de Trento* (Mexico City, 1855). For the case of New Spain (Mexico), see Mariano Galván Rivera, *Concilio III provincial mexicano celebrado en México el año de 1585* (Mexico City, 1859). For specific Yucatec examples of these ecclesiastical regulations, see “Sínodo diocesano celebrado por Su Señoría Ilustrísima el Dr. Juan Gómez de Parada” (1721), Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain (hereafter AGI), Audiencia de México, legajo 1030. See also “Sínodo diocesano celebrado en el año de 1737 en el obispado de Yucatán” (1737), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 3168. This laxity in dealing with the clergy’s sexual offenses was not a New World phenomenon: even in Europe before the reforms of the Council of Trent, the church turned a blind eye to all but the most open and scandalous violations of the vows of celibacy. For the best and most complete study of the concepts of sex and sexuality and the dilemma between sexual practices and church doctrine, see Asunción Lavrin, “Sexuality in Colonial Mexico: A Church Dilemma,” in *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Asunción Lavrin (Lincoln, NE, 1989),

9 To date the most complete discussion of solicitation in the confessional is Stephen Haliczer, *Sexuality in the Confessional: A Sacrament Profaned* (New York, 1996). See also Jorge René González M., “Clérigos solicitantes, perversos de la confesión,” in *De la santidad a la perversión, o de porqué no se cumplía la ley de Dios en la sociedad novohispana*, ed. Sergio Ortega (Mexico City, 1986), 239–52. For a study of the types of punishments and censures given to *solicitantes*, see Solange Alberro, “El discurso inquisitorial sobre los delitos de bigamia, poligamia y de solicitación,” in Alberro et al., *Seis ensayos sobre el discurso colonial relativo a la comunidad doméstica: Matrimonio, familia y sexualidad a través de los cronistas del siglo XVI, el Nuevo Testamento y el Santo Oficio de la Inquisición* (Mexico City, 1980), 215–26.

10 “Repuesta y confesión del padre Cristóbal de Valencia a las cargas hechas contra el por los Mayas del pueblo de Hocabia y su partido” (1 October 1609), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 472, expediente 5, fols. 117r–34r.


12 As Weisner-Hanks posits in *Christianity and Sexuality*, the term *sexuality* itself is “a more problematic word, because no one in the centuries I am discussing used it” (3). She also notes aptly that the term *sexuality* did not enter the English language until 1800. In this article as well, I use the term *sexuality* as a construct to mean, as Weisner-Hanks describes it generally, “the possession or exercise of sexual functions, desires, etc.” It is also interesting to note that the word or concept of *sexual* did not enter Spanish dictionaries until 1843; see *Diccionario de la lengua castellana por la Real Academia Española*, 9th ed. (Madrid, 1843), 666. The earliest use of the term *sexo* appears in the 1739 version of the dictionary, but here it merely conveys the meaning of “male and female gender”; see Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de la lengua castellana, en que se explica el verdadero sentido de las voces, su naturaleza y calidad, con las frases o modos de hablar, los proverbios o refranes, y otras cosas convenientes al uso de la lengua*, vol. 6 (Madrid, 1739), 106. It was not until the 1984 Spanish dictionary that the term *sexo* became associated with the sexual organs and the study of human sexuality (*sexología*).


14 The documents in the inquisitorial record are invaluable, regardless of any possible bias or clerical lens through which testimony was collected. Things so private and concealed as sexual acts leave scant evidence in the historical
record, and even less in the archaeological remains of ancient cultures. We know that most sexual relations considered “normal” took place behind closed doors, or in private places, with no witnesses other than the participants themselves, almost none of whom left any record of their encounters. Even modern science is incapable of revealing any real details of sexual practices and sexuality in the skeletal record of past societies. Similarly, most historical sources are also silent concerning sex. Most colonial documents in New Spain (even letters and diaries) contain no references to sex or sexuality. When sexual relations are hinted at in the documentary record, the documents were most often written by men. The testimony of young Maya women in these inquisitorial trials, for instance, is thus an incredibly valuable source that may give us some notion of colonial Maya women’s experiences, attitudes, and understandings of sexual relations and sexuality.


16 The modern word perversion describes those types of human behavior that established authorities consider to deviate from what is orthodox or normal. It was originally defined as a “deviation from the original meaning or doctrine,” literally a “turning aside” from the norm. Thus sexual perversity would mean in the colonial context the deviation from the norms of sexual relations. The Spanish term perversidad, for instance, was glossed as meaning “a great evil or corruption of customs and manners, or of the proper conduct or quality.” Someone who was perverso was believed to be “totally evil, defective in his actions, depraved in his customs and obligations to his proper state”; Diccionario de la lengua castellana (1739), vol. 5, 238.


18 See Pete Sigal, introduction to From Moon Goddesses to Virgins: The Colonization of Yucatecan Maya Sexual Desire (Austin, TX, 2000), xiii–xv.

19 See ibid., 8–10. Much has been written recently concerning sexuality and gender in the context of the archaeological record of Classic Maya society. Especially in surviving portrayals and iconography in several recently uncovered murals and other ceramic pottery, themes of Classic and pre-Classic Maya sexuality and sexual intercourse are prevalent.

20 According to Sigal, “There is no evidence that the Maya would have considered these sexual, and for yet others (e.g., ritualized intercourse between humans and gods), there is no place in modern Western discourse” (ibid., 10).

21 In many of the relaciones of Maya towns along the coasts, the respondents remarked that the Indian women went about bare breasted, while those of the interior described them as wearing a triangular garment (huipil) that covered their breasts. For a more detailed description and comparison, see Martín Sánchez, “Relación de Dzindzantun” (1581), in Mercedes De la Garza, Relaciones histórico-geograficas de Yucatán, 2 vols. (Mexico City, 1983): “Los hombres y mujeres se labraban por bien parecer, como las más veces andaban desnudos, y se embijaban cada día con tierra colorada” (1:413).

22 See “Relación de Tabi y Chunhuhub” (1581), in De la Garza, Relaciones histórico-geograficas de Yucatán. Here the encomendero wrote that “the Maya
married when they were older and they did not have more than one wife . . . and they were enemies of the vices of the flesh which they took to be great sins . . . and they punished adulterers both male and female with the death penalty” (1:164).
23 Alonso Julián, “Relación de Tetzal y Textual” (1581), in De la Garza, Relaciones histórico-geograficas de Yucatán, 1:238.
24 Martín de Palomar, “Relación de Motul” (1579), in De la Garza, Relaciones histórico-geograficas de Yucatán, 1:270.
25 Juan Gutiérrez Picón, “Relación de Ekbalam” (1579), in De la Garza, Relaciones histórico-geograficas de Yucatán, 2:139.
26 See Palomar, “Relación de Motul,” 1:270.
27 “Relación de Muxupipp” (1579), in De la Garza, Relaciones histórico-geograficas de Yucatán, 1:378–79.
29 See Gaspar Antonio Xiu, “Relación de los costumbres de los indios” (20 March 1582), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 110.
30 López de Cogolludo echoes Gaspar Antonio Xiu in his observations of Maya policing of sexuality: “They punish vices with rigor. . . . The man or woman who commits adultery received the death penalty by shooting them with arrows. . . . thus they abhorred this sin and they punished even noble and principal persons”; Fray Diego López de Cogolludo, Los tres siglos de la dominación española en Yucatán, o Historia de esta provincia, 2 vols. (Graz, Austria, 1971), 1:331.
31 Landa, Yucatan before and after the Conquest, 54–55.
32 Ibid., 54.
33 Ibid., 54.
34 See “Petición de don Diego Montejo, hijo natural de Francisco de Montejo, a don Carlos de Arellano para poder casar con Ana de Campos, viuda mujer que fue de Julián Doncel,” 22 November 1571, private collection, Mérida.
35 “Instrucciones y ordenanzas para Francisco de Montejo el mozo sobre la conquista de Yucatán, hecha por el Adelantado en el Ciudad Real de Chiapas” (1540), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 299.
36 “Testimonio de Juan Bote en la residencia del Adelantado de Yucatán” (1549), AGI, Justicia, legajo 300, 5 folios.
37 Chilam Balam of Chumayel. See Munro Edmonson, Heaven Born Merida and Its Destiny: The Book of Chilam Balam of Chumayel (Austin, TX, 1986).
38 See the large number of testimonies and declarations in the residencia trials of Francisco de Montejo in “Residencia de Francisco de Montejo, gobernador de Chiapas, Yucatán y Cozumel por el Licenciado Juan Rogel, oidor de la Audiencia de los Confines” (1546–47), AGI, Justicia, legajo 300, 789 folios; see also “Residencia de los alcaldes mayors, regidores y escribanos de la villa de Valladolid de Yucatán, hecho por el Dr. Diego Quijada, gobernador de Yucatán” (1563), AGI, Justicia, legajo 244, 678 folios.
39 See various declarations of the conquistadors who participated in the logistics of conquest in Yucatán in “Pleito del Fiscal de su majestad contra Alonso López, Alcalde de Tabasco” (1541–45), AGI, Justicia, legajo 195.


There is evidence and testimony that Aguilar trafficked and sold or exchanged as prostitutes or concubines more than one hundred Indian women from several provinces to his fellow conquistadors of Yucatán. Alonso López, a supporter of Aguilar and the Montejos, is also said to have sold or sent more than two hundred pretty young Indian women to Yucatán and Campeche for similar purposes. “Testimonio de Francisco de Cuesta sobre los abusos hechos por Alonso López y otros españoles contra las indias naborías” (1545), AGI, Justicia, legajo 195, 5 folios.

“Testimonio de Francisco de Cuesta sobre los abusos hechos por Alonso López y otros españoles contra las indias naborías” (1542), AGI, Justicia, legajo 195, 5 folios.

“Testimonio de Diego Martín sobre los abusos hechos por Alonso López” (1541), AGI, Justicia, legajo 195, 4 folios.

“Testimonio de Alonso de Elvira sobre los abusos hechos por Alonso López y su robo de algunos indias naborías que tenía” (1541), AGI, Justicia, legajo 195, 5 folios.

“Testimonio de Juan de Ayllón en el proceso del fiscal de Su Majestad en contra de Alonso López” (1541), AGI, Justicia, legajo 195, 7 folios.

See various documents in “Residencia de Francisco de Montejo, gobernador de Chiapas, Yucatán y Cozumel por el Licenciado Juan Rogel, oidor de la Audiencia de los Confines” (1546–47), AGI, Justicia, legajo 300, 789 folios.

For Maya testimony concerning female Maya slaves as young as twelve and fourteen years old who were handed over to the conquistador Gaspar Pacheco by the Maya of the town of Calkini, see Tsubasa Okoshi Harada, “Los Canules: Un Análisis etnohistórico del códice de Calkini,” PhD diss., Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1992, 82–83.


Ibid., 148.

56 See “Relación de Muxuppipp” (1581), in De la Garza, *Relaciones Histórico-Geográficas de Yucatán*, 1:377. Other Spaniards blamed the Maya’s consumption of the alcoholic beverage *balché* for their sexual excesses and incest. For instance, Diego de Contreras commented that “it was because of their drunkenness that they had carnal access with their sisters, their daughters, and other relatives, and in order to avoid this great sin [the friars] took from and prohibited this wine to them”; see “Relación de Nabalam, Tahcabo, Cozumel” (1579), in De la Garza *Relaciones Histórico-Geográficas de Yucatán*, 2:187.

57 See “Relación y forma que el Lic. don Diego García de Palacio, oidor de la audiencia real de Guatemala, hizo para los que hubieren de visitar, contar, tasar y repartir en las provincias de este distrito” (1576), AGI, Audiencia de Guatemala, legajo 128. It is interesting to note that as late as 1813 parish priests in Yucatán continued to complain about incest and sexual encounters between relatives. See “Informe del cura de Yaxcaba sobre los indios de su beneficio” (1813), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 3068. Bachiller Baeza complained that “once they are married it is indispensable to observe their domestic lives. . . and the priest should oblige them to set up a house apart from their parents, in order to avoid so many abuses and sins that would occur between fathers-in-law and their daughters-in-law, and even between fathers and daughters.”


59 See “Avisos del muy ilustre y reverendísimo señor don Fray Francisco de Toral, obispo de Yucatán, para los padres curas y vicarios de este obispado” (n.d.), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 369, 12 fols.


61 “Las mujeres por el propio tenor son tan desvergonzadas, tanto que ellas propias se van en busca de los españoles, en sabiendo que en algún pueblo de indios los hay, especialmente las que han sido amigas de ellos.” Juan Farfán el Viejo, “Relación de Kancopolche y Chochola” (1579), in De la Garza, *Relaciones Histórico-Geográficas de Yucatán*, 2:327.

62 “Instrucción que dio el juez provisor y vicario general de la provincia de Yucatán para los curas de almas y sus tenientes” (19 July 1765), Archivo Histórico del Arzobispado de Yucatán, Mérida (hereafter AHAY), Asuntos terminados, 5 fols. Earlier episcopal synods also focused on specific clerical preoccupations with the Maya’s fornication, bestiality, and other “crimes against nature,” such as sodomy (*pecado nefando*). See the documents of the synod of 1722, especially “Formula del edicto de pecados públicos que todos
los domingos primeros de Cuaresma se ha de publicar por los curas y vicarios de este obispado” (1722), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 1040, fols. 230r–32v.


64 See “Testimonio de Gaspar Pacheco en el juicio de residencia del Adelantado Francisco de Montejo” (1549), AGI, Justicia, legajo 300, 5 folios.

65 “Proceso contra Pedro Na, indio, por cometer actos contra natura teniendo acceso carnal con una gallina” (1563), AGI, Justicia, legajo 248, 30 fols.

66 “Testimonio de Juan Camal en contra de Pedro Na en el proceso contra acceso carnal con una gallina” (12 January 1563), AGI, Justicia, legajo 248; see also “Testimonio de Francisca Tun en el proceso contra Pedro Na” (12 January 1563), AGI, Justicia, legajo 248, 2 fols.

67 “Declaración del fiscal Gabriel Hernández en contra de Pedro Na por el crimen contra natura y el pecado nefando con una gallina” (14 January 1563), AGI, Justicia, legajo 248, 2 fols.

68 “Testimonio de la ejecución de la sentencia en contra de Pedro Na por el crimen del acto nefando con una gallina” (3 February 1563), AGI, Justicia, legajo 248, 2 fols.


70 Ibid., 68.

71 López de Cogolludo, *Historia de Yucatán*, 1:93, gives the complete set of ordenanzas of Tomás López Medel.

72 Ibid.

73 Ibid.

74 Landa, *Yucatan before and after the Conquest*, 46.

75 “Testimonio de Juan Hernández, vecino de Mérida en el proceso contra pecados nefandos” (15 January 1563), AGI, Justicia, legajo 248, 3 fols.

76 See “Parecer y testimonio del padre Fr. Juan de Benavides, guardián del convento de San Antonio de Ichbalche en las Montañas” (1 February 1615), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 138, 8 fols.


78 Ibid., 152.

79 Ibid., 153.


82 See Lizana, *Devocionario*. The original sixteenth-century image of the Virgin
of Izamal was a focus of Maya cult worship until it was destroyed by fire in 1829.


84 The Chilam Balam of Tusik contains more than fifteen parables and examples concerning clerical conceptions of the sins of lust and fornication. The Chilam Balam ofIxil and of Chan Cah have similar Maya passages discussing, commenting, and warning about “the sins of the flesh.” See Héctor M. Calderón, *Manuscritos de Chilam Balam de Tekax y Nah* (Mexico City, 1981); and the *Chilam Balam of Tusik* (Mexico City, 1984). See also Ralph L. Roys, “The Book of Chilam Balam of Ixil,” *Notes on Middle American Archaeology and Ethnology* 3, no. 75 (1946): 90–103.

85 Catholic attempts to control and reshape Maya sexual practices have recently been discussed in Sigal, *Moon Goddesses to Virgins* (2000). Catholic confession manuals were useful tools to police the sexuality of Mesoamerica’s indigenous people. In these manuals, the clergy attempted to “conquer,” “reform,” and reshape indigenous conceptions of sex, sexuality, eroticism, and acceptable moral behavior. Several recent studies have analyzed these confession manuals in order to understand more about both colonial Catholic and indigenous sexual practices and sexual morality. For a few examples, see Luis Arias González and Agustín Vivas Moreno, “Los manuales de confesión para indígenas del siglo XVI: Hacia un nuevo modelo de formación de la conciencia,” *Estudios de historia moderna* 10–11 (1992–93): 245–59. These confession manuals, they argue, reveal much about the interaction of priests and indigenous peoples and the mind-sets of both groups. For another example of the use of confession and confession manuals to dominate and change indigenous conceptions of eroticism and sexuality, see Sylvia Marcos, “Missionary Activity in Latin America: Confession Manuals and Indigenous Eroticism,” in *Religious Transformations and Socio-political Change: Eastern Europe and Latin America*, ed. Luther Martin (New York, 1993), 237–53. Similarly, for the now classic study of the use of the sacrament of confession and as a form of domination and social control, see Serge Gruzinski, “Individualization and Acculturation: Confession among the Nahua of Mexico from the Sixteenth to the Eighteenth Century,” in *Sexuality and Marriage in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Asunción Lavrin (Lincoln, NE, 1989), 96–117. Gruzinski described the sacrament of Christian confession of sin as a form of ideological control and subjugation. A similar interpretation of the confessional as a tool of colonial domination is found in Jorge Klor de Alva, “Sin and Confession among the Colonial Nahua: The Confessional as a Tool for Domination,” in *Memorias de la Reunión de Historiadores mexicanos y norteamericanos*, Oaxaca, October 1985 (Mexico City, 1992), vol. 1, 91–101. Klor de Alva also portrays Christian confession as a means of social control. He was one of the first to suggest that questions posed in Nahuatl-language confessionals hold vital information about indigenous sexuality and worldviews.

86 The entire title of the *Confesionario* is illustrative of the early clergy’s goals in controlling and dominating Yucatec Maya sexual practices: *Confesionario breve, para confesar a los indios, ponense las preguntas ordinarias en la lengua y la de Castilla, según las culpas que acostumbran cometer y en que ordinariamente pecan y se les pregunta*, private collection, Mérida, Yucatán.
These questions and others related to confessing sexual sins are found in ibid., 234v–35v.

For various colonial definitions of the word *keban*, see *Calepino de Motul: Diccionario maya-español*, vol. 1 (Mexico City: UNAM, 1995), 417–18.

See Burkhart, *Slippery Earth*, 23.

*Calepino de Motul*, 80.


Several instances of Maya women using the Spanish system to protect themselves from Maya noblemen and Spaniards are found in various documents submitted by the bishop of Yucatán against the sexual misconduct of parish priests and Franciscan friars. See especially “Informaciones del obispo de Yucatán contra los abusos de algunos frailes y clérigos del obispado” (1702), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 1035.

“Carta del Dr. don Gaspar Joseph Rodríguez Vizario, clérigo presbítero del obispado de Yucatán sobre los beneficios de la provincia y su mala conducta” (1700), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 312, 7 fols.


Mariano Galván Rivera, *Concilio III Provincial Mexicano celebrado en Mexico el año de 1585* (Mexico City, 1859).

Ibid., 139.

See “Avisos del muy ilustre y reverendísimo señor don Fr. Francisco de Toral, primer obispo de Yucatán, Cozumel y Tabasco, del consejo de Su Majestad, para los padres curas y vicarios de este obispado y para los que en su ausencia quedan en las iglesias” (1563), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 369.

Galván Rivera, *Concilio III provincial mexicano*.

See “Instrucción que dio el juez provisor y vicario general para los curas de almas y sus tenientes” (1785), AHAY, Asuntos terminados, 5 fols.: “Item... Desde la septuagésima deberán concurrir todos juntos con el cura para despachar la feligresía en el cumplimiento del precepto anual orando así todos juntos por todo el partido para el desahogo de las conciencias de los feligreses, sin permitirse de ninguna manera que el Teniente que reside en el pueblo sea el que despache las confesiones de el por si solo, pues cuando por alguna causa no puedan concurrir todos en este cura propio los deberá mudar enviando al uno, al otro pueblo y así con los demás en lo que se le encarga al citado cura la conciencia por ser la materia de tanta gravedad. . . . durante la semana saliese cada uno torna a su residencia esta misma concurrencia deberán tener el día de Corpus para la mayor solemnidad de tan venerable sacramento y el día del Patrón la misma y no otro día de los que llaman de Provincia.”

Haliczer’s *Sexuality in the Confessional* remains one of the best treatments of the crime of solicitation.

Scott and Burns, *Medieval Church*, 102.
Ibid., 102.

103 For several of the more important edicts of the Holy Office in Mexico against the crime of solicitation, see “Edicto de fe de los Inquisidores de México contra el crimen de la solicitación” (30 April 1620), AGN, Edictos, legajo 1, fols. 2–3; “Edicto de fe de los Inquisidores de México contra los solicitantes” (13 May 1624), AGN, Edictos, legajo 3, fols. 45–46; “Edicto de fe de los Inquisidores de México contra los solicitantes” (13 May 1651), AGN, Indiferente General, 3 fols. For a study of these edicts and the crime of solicitation, see Jorge René González Marmolejo, “El delito de solicitación en los edictos del tribunal del Santo Oficio, 1576–1819,” in Solange Alberro et al., Seis ensayos sobre el discurso colonial relativo a la comunidad doméstica: Matrimonio, familia y sexualidad a través de los cronistas del siglo XVI, el Nuevo Testamento y el Santo Oficio de la Inquisición (Mexico City, 1980), 169–211.

104 See the various decrees concerning the sacrament of penance and the modes and requirements for confessors and confessional in D. Ignacio López de Ayala, El Sacrosanto y ecuménico Concilio de Trento traducida al idioma castellano (Mexico City, 1855).

Definition of solicitation in The Catholic Encyclopedia, (New York, 1911). However, the definition and scope of the crime of solicitation was often confused by the bishops and inquisitors who investigated these crimes. For several instances in which commissaries of the Inquisition and bishops inquired and sought information concerning the definition and methods to define the actual crime of solicitation, see “Carta de Fr. Diego de Landa, obispo de Yucatán, consultando sobre casos de solicitación y averiguando sobre su jurisdicción” (1578), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 90, expediente 8, 3 fols. See also “Carta con dudas del Maestro Alonso Martín Bermejo, comisario del Santo Oficio en Yucatán sobre confesores solicitantes” (1580), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 85, expediente 8, 2 fols.

106 In terms of the surviving documents concerning the crime of solicitation committed by Yucatec clergy, it appears that the term solicitación was used most often to describe soliciting sex from a parishioner in the priest’s private chamber or the sacristy. Many of the cases involved the solicitation of sex while confessing women and men in these places. See table 3 in the appendix for descriptions of specific cases under study. Many of the major cases against priests and friars who solicited sex in the confessional can be found in the following archives: AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajos 35, 69, 85, 90, 122, 123, 249, 281, 288, 295, 303, 337, 926, 935, 954, 988, 1046, 1250, 1284, 1369, 1373, 1380, 1468; also many documents relating to solicitantes in Yucatán are found in AGI, Audiencia de México, legajos 1030–36, 3063, 3068; similar documents relating to Inquisition trials and proceedings are found in Archivo Histórico Nacional, Madrid (hereafter AHN), Inquisición (1735); AHN, Competencias.

107 All parish priests and confessors needed an explicit license from their bishop in order to conduct and take confessions. In the diocese of Yucatán, a special license was required to confess both women and men. Each cleric or priest was examined and periodically inspected during pastoral visitations to ensure that he did not abuse the sacrament of penance and solicit sex in the confessional. During the pastoral visitations of the province, the Yucatec bishops issued a series of questions to the Maya town officials and principal
residents of each town. The most important questions focused on the lifestyle and abuses of the clergy. The bishops wanted to know if “the Indians know of or have heard that the priests and their assistants have women or have engaged in illicit relations with them publicly or secretly.” See “Interrogatorio por el cual deben ser examinados los sujetos mas dignos de cada pueblo sobre las conductas y operaciones de sus curas de alma,” in “Visita pastoral al pueblo de Oxkutzcab” (1782), AHAY, Visitas pastorales, legajo 1, expediente 4, fols. 13r–15v. The answers to all thirty questions are then recorded. Most often the Maya hid the sexual crimes of their clergy, but in a few instances they revealed their priests’ sexual indiscretions.


“Expediente de las quejas de los indios del pueblo de Becal contra su cura Br. Bernardo Echiverria” (1768), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 3053, 63 fols.

Restall (Maya World, 161) was one of the first to note that this petition served as a form of revenge against what the Maya perceived as the hypercritically punitive reaction of Spanish priests to Maya sexual activity. Restall argues that the issue was control, for the “Maya view priests as outsiders without the authority or status to pass judgement and demand punishment over this aspect of Maya life.” However, I believe that the Mayas at heart in this petition were not challenging the priests’ authority but getting back at the entire Spanish system of sexual morality that had attempted to “conquer” Maya sexuality and encompass it within the more restrictive sexual morality of Spanish Catholicism. Restall does note that the allegation of “public sexual behavior” was a potent weapon. Thus, Spanish Catholic fears of “public scandal” meant that these types of charges could lead to the removal of a priest. For more detailed discussions of the removal of priests for solicitation, see González M., “Clérigos solicitantes.”

The original document can be found in AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 1046. This fascinating Maya petition has been examined and analyzed previously by Restall (Maya World) and Sigal (Moon Goddesses to Virgins). Although exceptionally vivid in its detail and the quality of its sarcastic prose, this document is not unique. Other similar petitions also remain in the archives; see AGI, Escritoría de Camara, legajos 313B (1630, 1660, 1667, 1670, and 1671), 317 (1660–79); and AGN, Ramo de Inquisición (1578–89), legajo 69, expediente 472.

Sigal, Moon Goddesses to Virgins, 65.

Restall (Maya World, 141–42) notes the Inquisition official’s horror and his notations in reaction to the petition. The original is found in AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 1187, expediente. 2, fols. 59–61.

See AHAY, Visitas pastorales (1781), legajo 1.

See Sigal, Moon Goddesses to Virgins, 75–76. The original Maya petition is found in AGN, Ramo de Inquisición (1589), legajo 69.

Andrés Mexia was partially exonerated when he proved to the Inquisitors
that many of the Maya who declared against him were ones he had punished for idolatry and other "faltas de doctrina." Also, he stated that the Maya denounced him under the inducement and sinister plot of their local Spanish encomendero, whom Mexía had punished for his own sexual indiscretions with two local Maya women. Mexía declared in his own defense, "All that they said against me was done out of the sinister inducement of their Encomendero, who wishes me ill because I conducted a trial against him for living in concubinage in the said town with two married Indian women, and for this reason he has had animosity, and he has openly stated that he would do anything in his power to harm me." See response to charge no. 46 in "Respuestas del clérigo Andrés Mexía contra los cargos que le hicieron los indios de su partido" (1578), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 69, expediente 5, fol. 191v.

117 “Respuestas del clérigo Andrés Mexía” (1578), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 69, expediente 5, fol. 192r.

118 Taken from Restall, Maya World, 164. The original Maya document can be found in the Inquisition trial against Andrés Mexía. See AGN, Inquisición (1578–89), legajo 69, expediente 5.

119 See “Testimonio y declaración de María Tun, india del pueblo de Peto, contra su cura Andrés Mexía” (1589), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 69, expediente 5, fols. 318r–19r; see also “Testimonio y declaración de María Col, india del pueblo de Peto, contra su cura Andrés Mexía” (1589), legajo 69, expediente 5, fols. 319r–20r; and “Testimonio y declaración de Mencia Puc, india del pueblo de Peto, contra su cura Andrés Mexía” (1589), legajo 69, expediente 5, fols. 320r–21r. Other testimonies and denunciations are found in the same volume, AGN, Inquisición (1578–89), legajo 69, expediente 5, fols. 268–78.

120 See “Petición de Andrés Mexía beneficiado de Calamud y Peto en que se opone de enemistad contra los indios que le han informado contra el delito de solicitud y presenta recaudos como ya son amigos” (1589), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 69, expediente 5, fols. 273r–74v.

121 “Sentencia y votos hecho por los inquisidores de México contra el clérigo presbítero Andrés Mexía por el crimen de solicitud a sus hijas de confesión” (13 July 1590), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 69, expediente 5, fol. 325r.

122 “Carta del provincial del orden de San Francisco, Fr. Alonso de Río Frío dando cuenta de unas peticiones de algunas indios en contra de Fr. Pedro de Vergara por el delito de solicitud” (1599), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 249, expediente 1, 3 fols.

123 “Declaración de Ana Kuk, en contra de Fr. Pedro Vergara por el crimen de solicitud” (16 November 1598), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 249, expediente 1, fol. 12.

124 “Declaración de Beatriz Dzib, en contra de Fr. Pedro Vergara por el crimen de solicitud” (16 November 1598), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 249, expediente 1.

125 “Declaración de María Cocom, en contra de Fr. Pedro Vergara por el crimen de solicitud” (16 November 1598), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 249.

126 “Carta del provincial del orden de San Francisco en Yucatán sobre el caso de
solicitud en contra de Fr. Pedro de Vergara” (1598), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 249, expediente 1.

127 “Carta de Fr. Juan de Santa María, guardián del convento de Campeche en contra Fr. Pedro de Vergara y sus abusos de los indios” (14 March 1599), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 249, expediente 1.

128 “Carta de Fr. Alonso de Río Frío contra Fr. Pedro de Vergara escrita a los Señores Inquisidores de México” (16 November 1599), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 249, expediente 1, fol. 26.

129 “Carta del visitador Fr. Miguel López acerca del caso de Fr. Pedro de Vergara con información sobre el odio que le tienen los indios que han declarado contra el en el caso de solicitud” (20 October 1600), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 249, expediente 1.

130 “Carta de Fr. Miguel López” (20 October 1600), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 249, expediente 1. Interestingly, this is the last document in the Inquisition trial against him. There is no record of any punishment administered. No doubt the Inquisitors believed that the Mayas had testified falsely to remove their priest. Vergara would go on to serve in the Franciscan missions of the Sierra, where he appeared around 1603.

131 “Declaración y testimonio hecho por Pablo Chan, indio natural del pueblo de Hoctun, en contra de su cura Cristóbal de Valencia” (July 1609), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 472, expediente 5, 4 fols.

132 “Confesión del clérigo Cristóbal de Valencia con sus respuestas a los cargos impuestos contra el por los indios de su partido” (1609), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 472, expediente 5, 14 fols.

133 “Carta del obispo de Yucatán sobre sus relaciones con el gobernador” (10 October 1606), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 369, 4 fols.

134 See “Proceso del Santo Oficio contra el Br. don Antonio Ramón de La Cueva, cura interino que fue del partido de Peto, por solicitante” (1730), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 1046, expediente 4, fols. 107–26.

135 “Carta del comisario del Santo Oficio, Br. Nicolas Leyton, con información sobre la solicitud ad turpia de unas indias en la confesión por Padre don Antonio Ramón de La Cueva, cura interino de Peto” (21 March 1730), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 1046, expediente 4, fols. 108r–9r.

136 “Carta del comisario del Santo Oficio, Br. Nicolas Leyton, con información sobre otra delito de solicitación” (29 March 1730), AGN, Ramo de Inquisición, legajo 1046, expediente 4, fols. 112r–13r.

137 “Petición en lengua yucateca contra el cura don Antonio hecho por el Maestro de Capilla del pueblo de San Francisco de Uman” (1781), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 3064, 10 fols.

138 “Petición en lengua yucateca contra el cura don Luis Antonio de Echazarreta” (1781), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 3064, 10 fols.

139 See various denunciations of Padre Echazarreta in AGI, Audiencia de México, vol. 3064 (1781).

140 “Declaración y testimonio de Francisca Cauiche en contra el cura de Uman” (26 April 1781), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 3064, 4 fols.

141 “Petición y denuncia hecha por Félix Cocom, maestro de capilla del pueblo de Uman contra su cura por abusos que le había hecho” (1781), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 3064, 4 fols.

142 “Declaración de don Andrés Tinal, cacique del pueblo de Tahuman contra su
cura” (1781), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 3064, 4 fols.; see also “Carta y petición del cacique y oficiales indios del pueblo de Uman con unas quejas contra su cura” (1781), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 3064, 6 fols.

143 “Petición en lengua yucateca contra el cura don Antonio hecho por el maestro de capilla del pueblo de San Francisco de Uman, Félix Cocom” (1781), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 3064, 10 fols.

144 “Petición y denuncia hecha por Félix Cocom, maestro de capilla del pueblo de Uman contra su cura por abuses que le había hecho” (1781), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 3064, 4 fols.

145 “Declaración de don Ignacio Quintal, español, sobre los abusos del cura de Uman” (1781), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 3064, 4 fols.

146 Both Francisca Cauiche and Manuela Pacheco, a Spanish woman, complained that their troubles with their husbands resulted from their having been raped by the priest. See “Carta y petición del cacique y oficiales indios del pueblo de Uman con unas quejas contra su cura” (1781), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 3064, 6 fols.

147 See the official complaints of the cacique don Andrés Tinal and the other town officials of Uman: “Petición en lengua yucateca con traducción de las quejas del cacique y cabildo del pueblo de Uman contra los abusos de su cura interino” (1780), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 3064, 4 fols. Specific instructions and official ecclesiastical quotas were set to regulate the clergy’s use of Maya labor. A table of fees, called the arancel, existed to regulate these economic interchanges. For an example of these regulations and other laws prohibiting clerical exactions in the province of Yucatán, see “Arancel de lo que cada indio debe contribuir para el sustento de su cura en el discurso del año” (1737), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 3168; see also “Arancel para los derechos que se deben llevar en este curato y vicaría de Campeche” (1763), AHAY, Asuntos terminados, legajo 1, expediente 14. For a detailed examination of the abuses and exploitation of the Maya by both legal and illegal means, see John F. Chuchiak, “Ca numiae, lay u cal caxtlan patan lae: El tributo colonial y la nutrición de los Mayas, 1542–1812—Un estudio sobre los efectos de la conquista y el colonialismo en los Mayas de Yucatán,” in Iglesia y sociedad en América Latina colonial (Mexico City, 1995), 117–225.

148 It is interesting to note that a large number of priests and friars denounced for solicitation had previously punished their accusers for serious infractions of Catholic law such as witchcraft, idolatry, and public drunkenness. See Chuchiak, “Indian Inquisition,” 512n119.

149 The complicity of many Maya parishioners in the sexual misconduct of the clergy is evident in transcripts of many Inquisition and episcopal court trials for sexual misconduct. For one example, see “Información del obispo de Yucatán sobre los excesos de religiosos saliéndose de noche vestidos de seglares y los escándalos públicos y concubinatos que tienen” (1703), AGI, Audiencia de México, legajo 1035, 42 fols.

150 Accusations of sexual abuse by the clergy continued long into the early national period. The section of the National Archives of Mexico containing material confiscated from the church archives (Bienes nacionales, Bienes nacionalizadas) shows that as late as the mid-nineteenth century parish priests were accused of abuse and sexual misconduct by the Maya.