

An Indian View of Popé

INTERROGATORIES AND DEPOSITIONS of three Indians of the Tehua nation, taken by the order of Don Antonio de Otermín.

The originals of these are found in the *Archivo Gcneral of Mexico. Historia*, vol. 26, *Documentos de Otermín*,

DEPOSITION.

In the month December, one thousand six hundred and eighty-one, Antonio de Otermín recorded the testimony of Indians from several Pueblos including Jemez Zuni Tesuque San Felipe and Sandia, on the massacre of the christen colonists and Indians, the state of the province after the uprising, and how they planed to receive his coming into their lands. Some spoke Spanish as well as other Pueblo languages and they were in agrement as to the main facts, adding incidents from specific Pueblos.

Pedro Naranjo-At the summons of an Indian named Pope who is said to have communication with the devil, it happened that in a kiva of the pueblo of Los Taos there appeared to the said **Popé** three figures of Indians who never came out of the kiva. They gave the said Popé to understand that they were going underground to the lake of Copala. He saw these figures emit fire from all the extremities of their bodies, and that one of them was called Caudi, another Tilini, and the other Tleume; and these three beings spoke to the said Popé, who was in hiding from the secretary, Francisco Xavier, who wished to punish him as a sorcerer. They told him to make a cord of maguey fiber and tie some knots, which would signify the number of days that they must wait before the rebellion. He said that the cord was passed through all the pueblos of the kingdom so that the ones which agreed to it [the uprising] might untie one knot in sign of obedience, and by the other knots they would know the days which were lacking; and this was to be done on pain of death to those who refused to agree to it. As a sign of agreement and notice of having concurred in the treason and perfidy they were to send tip smoke signals to that effect in each one of the pueblos singly. The said cord was taken from pueblo to pueblo by the swiftest youths **under the penalty of deaths** if they revealed the secret. Everything being thus arranged, two days before the time set for its execution, because his lordship had learned of it and had imprisoned two Indian accomplices from the pueblo of Tesuque, it was carried out prematurely that night, because it seemed to them that they were now discovered; and they killed the religious, Spaniards, women, and children. This being done, it was proclaimed in all the pueblos that everyone in common should obey the commands of their father whom they did not know, which would be given through El Caydi or El Popé. This was heard by Alonso Catiti, who came to the pueblo of this declarant to say that everyone must unite to go to the villa to kill the governor and the Spaniards who had remained with him, and that he who did not obey would, on their return, be beheaded; and in fear of this they agreed to it. Finally the señor governor and those who were with him escaped from the siege, and later this declarant saw that as soon as the Spaniards had left the kingdom an order came from the said Indian, Popé, in which he commanded all the Indians to break the lands and enlarge their cultivated fields, saying that now they were as they had been in ancient times, free from the labor they had performed for the religious and the Spaniards, who could not now be alive. He said that this is the legitimate cause and the reason they had for rebelling, because they had always desired to live as they had when they came out of the lake of Copala. Thus he replies to the question.

Asked for what reason they so blindly burned the images, temples, crosses, and other things of divine worship, he stated that the said Indian, Pope, came down in person, and with him El Saca and El Chiato from the pueblo of Los Taos, and other captains and leaders and many people

who were in his train, and he ordered in all the pueblos through which he passed that they instantly break up and burn the images of the holy Christ, the Virgin Mary and the other saints, the crosses, and everything pertaining to Christianity, and that they burn the churches, break up the bells, and separate from the wives whom God had given them in marriage and take those whom they desired. In order to take away their baptismal names, the water, and the holy oils, they were to plunge into the rivers and wash themselves with amole, which is a root native to the country, washing even their clothing, with the understanding that there would thus be taken from them the character of the holy sacraments. They did this, and also many other things which he does not recall, given to understand that this mandate had come from the Caydi and the other two who emitted fire from their extremities in the said kiva of Taos, and that they thereby returned to the state of their antiquity, as when they came from the lake of Copala; that this was the better life and the one they desired, because the God of the Spaniards was worth nothing and theirs was very strong, the Spaniard's God being rotten wood. These things were observed and obeyed by all except some who, moved by the zeal of **Christians, opposed it, and such persons the said Popé caused to be killed immediately.** He saw to it that they at once erected and rebuilt their houses of idolatry, which they call kivas. And they made very ugly masks in imitation of the devil in order to dance the dance of the cacina; and he said likewise that the devil had given them to understand that living thus in accordance with the law of their ancestors, they would harvest a great deal of maize, many beans, a great abundance of cotton, calabashes, and very large water-melons and cantaloupes; and that they could erect their houses and enjoy abundant health and leisure. As he has said, the People were very much pleased, living at their ease in this life of their antiquity, which was the chief cause of their falling into such laxity. Following what has already been stated, in order to terrorize them further and cause them to observe the diabolical commands, there came to them a pronouncement from the three demons already described, and from El Popé, to the effect that he who might still keep in his heart a regard for the priests the governor, and the Spaniards would be known from his unclean face and clothes, and would be punished. And he stated that the said four persons stopped at nothing to have their commands obeyed. Thus he replies to the question.

Declaration of Juan Lorenzo and Francisco Lorenzo, brothers.

Juan Lorenzo and the other Francisco Lorenzo, full brothers, who when the rebellion broke out were living on a little rancho near the pueblo of San Felipe, along with their mother and a grown brother of theirs. On the day of the glorious San Lorenzo, a Saturday, the two declarants were going simply and as Christians to the pueblo of San Felipe to see if the minister religious had come to say mass, and to hear it, when the Indians of the pueblo seized them and they found themselves prisoners, being still confused about the cause. They kept them in the plaza of the pueblo under guard because a number of Indians had left the said pueblo for that of Santo Domingo, to kill the religious, the alcalde mayor, and the other persons who might be there, as in fact they did, and these two witnesses saw them return from committing the said murders, and telling what had happened. They saw also that on that same evening at about the time of the angelus there arrived at the said pueblo the elder brother of these two deponents, named Bartolomé Naranjo. The Indians of the pueblo came up to him and said, "Are you willing to help the Indians and be on their side in order to kill the religious and the Spaniards?" To which their said brother replied, "Are you crazy? What is it you are trying to do?" And he was unwilling to agree to it, saying that it was not right. After leaving him alone for a time they seized him and perfidiously and treacherously **fell upon him with war clubs and killed him.**

Asked what happened after the said rebellion, they said they saw that the said Indian, Popé came down to the pueblo of San Felipe accompanied by many captains from the pueblos and by other Indians and ordered the churches burned and the holy images broken up and burned.

They took possession of everything in the sacristy pertaining to divine worship, and said that they were weary of putting in order, sweeping, heating, and adorning the church; and that they proclaimed both in the said pueblo and in the others that **he who should utter the name of Jesus would be killed immediately**; and that they [the Indians] **were not to pray or to live with the wives whom they had taken in holy matrimony, all under the said penalty of death**; and that thereupon they could live contentedly, happy in their freedoms, living according to their ancient custom. Thus they replied to the question.

They declared further that by order of the said Popé and of Alonso Catiti, governor and head of the Queres nation, they were commanded to place in the pueblo and its environs piles of stones on which they could offer ground corn and other cereals and tobacco, they saying that the stones were their God, and that they were to observe this, even to the children, giving them to understand that thereby they would have everything they might desire. They say that they have passed over many other things that they do not recall, but they saw that as soon as the señor governor and the rest of the Spaniards had left, the Indians erected many kivas in the pueblos and danced the dances of the cazina and of losse, which are dances instituted by the devil. Thus they replied.

Asked whether during all the time they have been among the said idolators they have recognized, seen, or heard that the said apostates may have felt any repentance for what had been done or any inclination to return to the law of God or to receive the Spaniards, they said that they have in no wise heard or understood such; rather, they have heard it said in general that the Spaniards must not come, and that if they should come, they must fight them to the death; and that in case they should find themselves defeated, they must surrender peacefully so as to kill them [the Spaniards] treacherously. The one named Francisco, the younger of the two brothers, who came from among the said apostates three days after the elder brother, said that he saw in the junta which the said apostates held in the sierra of La Cieneguilla that they were discussing making a feigned peace with the Spaniards who went there under the command of the lieutenant general of cavalry, in order to kill them while they slept. To this end the said leader, Alonso Catiti, directed that the prettiest girls bathe and adorn themselves and go down to the pueblo of Cochiti to provoke the Spaniards to lewdness. This deponent was present at the consultation and heard them order the girls to please the Spaniards even though it might have to be done gratis, and he saw them wash and dress themselves; and he saw the said Alonso Catiti go about preparing the people so that at night, while the Spaniards were sleeping with them, the Indians would come in **with clubs to kill the Spaniards**, while others would attack to drive off their horses, and thus they would be destroyed. For this purpose they ordered the other Indians who had remained in the pueblos to come **under penalty of death** to assist them in what had been decided upon. After the girls were ready to go down, they saw a column of Spaniards coming toward the said pueblo before anyone had left, whereupon they were terrified and did not go. Thus they replied to the question. Source:

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