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"*By means of tigers*": *Jaguars as Agents of Conversion in Jesuit Mission Records of Paraguay and the Moxos, 1600–1768*

Karin Vélez

In the mid-1600s, the Jesuit Antonio Ruiz de Montoya reported that man-eating jaguars were helping to convert Guaraní Indians to Catholicism. This article tests his claim by aggregating multiple mentions of jaguars found in the accounts and letters of Jesuit missionaries in the reductions of Paraguay and the Moxos from the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, including the writing of Jesuits Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, François-Xavier Eder, Alonso Messia, and Martín Dobrizhoffer. Cumulatively, their predator sightings and references suggest that, indeed, the actions of real jaguars were transforming local religious beliefs. The presence of jaguars in Jesuit records also reveals the complexity of missionary and indigenous attitudes towards animals. Jesuits often associated jaguars with pre-Christian jaguar-shaman rituals, but also considered them to be divine instruments. Indigenous peoples sometimes preserved older practices, but also occasionally took real jaguars as an impetus to convert to Christianity. Both Jesuits and indigenous peoples reacted to jaguar incursions with violence as well as spiritual reflection. Most importantly, the prominence of active jaguars on this contested religious frontier suggests that animals should be viewed as more than symbols in Christian history. Jesuit records indicate that jaguars were key third players in zones where Europeans and indigenous populations met.

"Heaven overcame their savagery by means of tigers," the Jesuit Antonio Ruiz de Montoya wrote of the nearly six thousand Guaraní converts to Christianity at the reduction of Santo Tomé, in the colonial province of Paraguay in the mid-1600s. "[The tigers] ranged in packs through the clearings, farms and forests, killing many people, mainly pagans who rebelliously avoided the Fathers . . . As a result all the pagans started coming into the reduction, and this affliction was ended by a novena of sung Masses."[1] Montoya went on to chronicle in harrowing detail

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[1]Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, *The Spiritual Conquest Accomplished by the Religious of the Society of Jesus in the Provinces of Paraguay, Paraná, Uruguay and Tape* [1639], trans. C. J. McNaspy, S.J. (St. Louis, Mo.: The Institute of Jesuit Sources, 1993), 158.

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the systematic attacks against the Guaraní who lived outside the Christianized Santo Tomé mission. A group of Guaraní tried to build a defensive palisade against the tigers, but the tigers circled it for four days without allowing them to exit. Weeks later, tigers returned to wreak havoc against new converts whose faith had lapsed, and who had made the mistake of leaving the reduction to consult traditional "magicians." This time, the Guaraní set "more than two hundred traps" against the rampaging tigers, baiting them with deer and dogs, but with no success. The clever tigers somehow managed to extract the meat without being trapped and continued to attack humans. Montoya reported that the Guaraní then realized that "the animals' behavior went beyond what was natural," and could only be staved off "by means of [Christian] prayers and petitions."[2]

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of this seventeenth-century Jesuit report is that it was neither isolated, nor rare. Letters from the Jesuit missions in South America are filled with accounts of jaguars, the "tigers" in Montoya's report. This article aggregates mentions of jaguars found in the accounts and letters of Jesuit missionaries in the Catholic reductions in two zones between the mid-1600s and mid-1700s: Paraguay, and the Moxos missions. Though these mission zones are separated by more than a thousand miles, jaguars played crucial roles on both contested frontiers where they sometimes prompted conversion. Jesuit eyewitnesses to jaguar encounters seemed especially willing to give jaguars due measure for helping to spread Catholicism. Yet historians and scholars of religion instead continue to give the lion's share of credit for Christianizing the Americas to human actors.

It is important to call attention back to the historical impact of jaguars on early modern conversions to Christianity for at least two reasons. First of all, these dynamic jaguars appear in *Jesuit* writings with *positive*, not demonic attributions. This is unusual.[3] Generally, missionaries in jaguar-populated frontiers wrote transparently about being wary of jaguars because of their centrality in pre-Christian indigenous religions. Jaguars tend to surface in pre-eighteenth century Catholic records as troublesome indicators of failure to convert. A particularly dramatic example of this comes from the city of Texcoco in the heartland of Mexico in 1536, when a local shaman, Martin Ocelotl, was brought before the Inquisition by Franciscan missionary Fray Antonio de Ciudad Rodrigo under charges that included shape-shifting into

[2]Montoya, *The Spiritual Conquest,* 159.

[3]Anthropologist Carlos Fausto, for instance, concludes on the basis of the writing of Jesuit Martín Dobrizhoffer that: "For the [Jesuit] missionaries, the shamans' ability to transform themselves into the feline stood as evidence of their intimate rapport with the devil, the Great Transformer." Carlos Fausto, "A Blend of Blood and Tobacco: Shamans and Jaguars among the Parakaña of Eastern Amazonia," in *In Darkness and Secrecy: The Anthropology of Assault Sorcery and Witchcraft in Amazonia,* ed. Neil L. Whitehead and Robin Wright (Durham, N.C.: Duke University, 2004), 158.

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jaguar form.[4] The Nahuatl word “ocelotl” means jaguar, a coincidence that inspired historian Patricia Lopes Don to entitle her section describing the trial “Friars v. Jaguar.”[5] In the context of an Inquisition investigation, Spanish settlers as well as missionaries were quick to describe jaguars negatively, associating Ocelotl with the persistence of indigenous beliefs and even with the devil.[6] Patricia Lopes Don cleaves closely to her archival material by also linking jaguars directly to “native sorcerers” like Ocelotl, focusing on the jaguar’s old indigenous symbolisms rather than on its potentially new Catholic meaning. She interprets both the jaguar and its human namesake in the 1536 case as directly opposed to Christianity.[7]

But jaguars could also be congruent with Catholicism, as the Jesuit Montoya claimed in the 1630s. A few scholars have teased out how missionaries and indigenous neophytes alike were able to twist jaguars to fit Christian understandings, thus using these animals to encourage conversion to Catholicism. For instance, Davíd Carrasco singles out a group of converted Maya in the city of Mérida in Mexico’s Yucatán peninsula whom he calls “Jaguar Christians,” or “Christians in terms of the Maya worldview.”[8] Carrasco bases his interpretation on a manuscript of late colonial Maya construction, *The Book of Chilam Balam of Tizimin*, which retells Mayan history from the seventh through the nineteenth centuries. The history was cumulatively recorded by Mayan priests in twenty-year cycles, with each cycle having an official prophet known as the “Chilam Balam,” or Spokesman of the Jaguar. Carrasco flags this passage of the *Tizimin* manuscript that refers to the sixteenth century, the cycle “11 Ahau” that was marked by the Spanish Conquest:

> So be it: Your younger brothers are coming!
> Your older brothers are arriving
> To change your pants,

[4]Patricia Lopes Don, “Franciscans, Indian Sorcerers, and the Inquisition in New Spain, 1536–1543,” *Journal of World History* 17, no. 1 (March 2006): 44. Witnesses claimed that he could transform into a “tiger” (jaguar), lion (puma), or dog.

[5]Don, “Franciscans,” 34.

[6]Don, “Franciscans,” 37. She refers to the testimonies of Cristóbal Cisneros, a Spanish encomendero from Texcoco, and another Spanish settler, Pedro de Meneses, who both testified about Martin Ocelotl’s “probable communion with the devil” and “satanic powers.”

[7]Don writes that Ocelotl was “spreading an innovative philosophy that was potentially much more dangerous to the Christian mission than even the friars realized.” (39). The danger lay in his deliberate positioning of himself as “a center of alternative thinking to Catholicism” (43). Historian Louise Burkhart makes a similar assessment of Ocelotl as not simply reverting to pre-Christian Nahua beliefs, but creating a new, explicitly anti-Christian ideology. Louise M. Burkhart, *The Slippery Earth: Nahua-Christian Moral Dialogue in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1989), 140.

[8]Davíd Carrasco, “Borderlands and ‘Biblical Hurricane’: Images and Stories of Latin American Rhythms of Life,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 101, no. 3/4 (July–October 2008): 362–363.

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> To change your clothes,
> To whiten your dress,
> To whiten your pants—
> The foreign judges,
> The bearded men
> Of Heaven Born Merida,
> The seat of the lands.
> And they
> Are the sun priests
> Of the living God,
> The True God.
> He shall be worshiped
> In one communion
> On earth
> Below:
> An additional
> Rule.
> And for the fatherless,
> And for the motherless--
> Jaguar was the head
> And urged his people
> To be sprinkled
> In the changed city.
> So came about
> Its founding,
> And it was the founding
> Of the three-part rule
> In Heaven Born Merida.[9]

Here we have another "Ocelotl," or human who has assumed the literal title of Jaguar, or "Balam." In this case, Jaguar is not just a tag of sacred identity, but also an official administrative post, "the highest native official in Mayan communities who controlled public offices, land titles, and tribute rights."[10] This Mayan Jaguar, a contemporary of the Nahua shaman called Jaguar, exhorted his followers to move in precisely the opposite direction: while Martin Ocelotl pulled away from Christianity, this Balam pushed towards it, directing the Maya of Mérida to be "sprinkled" or baptized into the Christian faith.

Thus, scholars on the hunt for spiritually resonant jaguars in the historical record today can find evidence to support either interpretation of jaguars as

[9] Munro S. Edmonson, trans. and ed., *The Ancient Future of the Itza: The Book of Chilam Balam of Tizimin* (Austin: University of Texas, 1982), 44–45, ll. 813–844. Mérida was the Mayan administrative capital for the province of Chakan.

[10] Carrasco, "Borderlands," 363.

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being flashpoints for religious competition or convergence. However, the problem with focusing on these two poles is that they make the story exclusively about humans, reducing the jaguar to a mere title or human-manipulated tool. David Quammen addresses this troubling distortion in the field of religious studies in reference to the one hundred thirty mentions of lions in the Bible. In his global consideration of "man-eaters" or "alpha predators," a category that includes jaguars alongside lions, Quammen asks, "[Were] biblical lions, purely imaginary beasts? Were they phantasms concocted from distantly rumored archetypes? No, they were *real lions* cast in a pageant of holy parable."[11] Kristin Dombek follows such holy pageant-casting in earnest in her study of how animals figure in evangelical Christian stage plays about the apocalypse in the United States today. She writes that some Christian figurative usage of animals can "sacrifice the animality of the animal—and the animal in the human—to create the fiction of a human-centered world."[12] Quammen, Dombek and others contributing to the new field of Animal Studies have brought animals into the limelight as initiators and participants in their own right, with the capacity to significantly affect outcomes in the history of the planet.[13] Laura Hobgood-Oster summarizes their plea to Church historians most succinctly in her 2008 book *Holy Dogs and Asses: Animals in the Christian Tradition.* In her attempt to write animals back into the Christian past specifically, Hobgood-Oster argues that "reading animals as only and always *symbol* is escapist and serves to reinforce human superiority and dominance."[14]

Yet lack of concrete information about animals in the distant past makes it difficult to move beyond the sphere of religious symbolism. For instance, in his landmark 1993 article "Santiago's Horse: Christianity and Colonial Indian Resistance in the Heartland of New Spain," historian William Taylor invokes horses to demonstrate how in Mexico, animals were once seen as

[11]He continues eloquently: "They were theological correlatives of local fauna." David Quammen, *Monster of God: The Man-Eating Predator in the Jungles of History and the Mind* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2004), 7.

[12]Kristin Dombek, "Murder in the Theme Park: Evangelical Animals and the End of the World," *The Drama Review* 51, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 140. In her study on early Christianity, Ingvild Saevild Gilhus also notes an "allegorical trend, which turned animals into signs" (270). As a result of this trend, animals "fade as real creatures [and] rise again in a 'supra-bestial' form . . . on the metaphorical level, 'the wild animals' were again and again conquered by the martyrs." Ingvild Saelid Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman and Early Christian Ideas* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 204.

[13]See, for instance, Paul Waldau and Kimberley Patton, ed., *A Communion of Subjects: Animals in Religion, Science and Ethics* (New York: Columbia University, 2006).

[14]Laura Hobgood-Oster, *Holy Dogs and Asses: Animals in the Christian Tradition* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 2008), 15.

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"agents of greater forces working upon human destiny."[15] Taylor describes how this belief led some Catholic Indians to privilege the horse of St. James (Santiago) over the saint himself well into the eighteenth century, when sometimes they represented the horse without its saintly rider in ritual dances. Taylor offers a tantalizing glimpse of how real Spanish horses might have been experienced by local and eventually Christianized populations in Mexico in the early centuries of encounter, with horses being seen "not as obedient brutes or emblems of the owners' social standing but as courageous, powerful animal warriors that may have acted in unison with their riders but were independent of them."[16] If Taylor is correct that we lost Santiago for his horse in early modern Catholic Mexico, we have gone on to lose the horse as well in even our best post-modern analyses. For Taylor's article still focuses on the *idea* of an animal as it has been represented by humans, rather than on the animal itself. The idea of a saint's horse can be tracked in our anthropocentric archives, whereas the literal horse of St. James and the individual horses of eighteenth-century Mexican Catholics are more elusive.

However, due to positive Jesuit record-keeping about jaguars in Paraguay and the Moxos in the 1700s, a handful of individual jaguars from that region have been preserved. The second intervention of this article is to insist that these animals were, and should be, more than an idea in histories of Christianity. Amazonian jaguars endured and aggressively intruded in the new mix of creatures on the frontier, sometimes significantly changing the course of human events there. Jesuit foregrounding of jaguars as movers and shakers in Catholic history additionally demonstrates how Church records can be used to counterbalance narrow interpretations of first encounters. For instance, recently there has been renewed interest in rewriting narratives of the conquest of the Americas to highlight animals, plants and microbes as active contributors. In many of these new tellings, European animals have a fearsome surplus of agency, appearing en masse as a kind of plague. Imported horses, cattle, pigs, and sheep are cited for proliferating outside of human control, cumulatively destroying or irrevocably altering New World environments.[17] Missionary accounts preserve a different and critical

[15]William B. Taylor, "Santiago's Horse: Christianity and Colonial Indian Resistance in the Heartland of New Spain," in *Violence, Resistance, and Survival in the Americas: Native Americans and the Legacy of Conquest*, ed. William B. Taylor and Franklin Pease G. Y. (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1994), 158.

[16]Taylor, "Santiago's Horse," 157.

[17]"What happened when the horse reached what is today Argentina and Uruguay is best described as a biological explosion: horses running free on the grassy vastness propagated in a manner similar to the smallpox virus in the salubrious environment of Indian bodies." Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1972), 84. Also: Elinor G. K. Melville, *A Plague of Sheep: Environmental*

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counterpoint from that era, however. In the cases presented here, Jesuit writers illuminate autochthonous, definitively local, *American* fauna. Jaguars figure in Paraguayan and Moxos reports as a useful reminder that *native* animal kingdoms were key third players in zones where Europeans and indigenous populations met.

How did real jaguars affect the Paraguayan and Moxos fields of conversion? This article begins to answer that question by introducing the major actors in these mission frontiers at the turn of the eighteenth century: jaguars, Jesuits, and the many indigenous populations gathered in the missions, most notably the Guaraní and the Moxos. Second, a few of the most gripping jaguar episodes culled from these Jesuit records are presented, to illustrate how some jaguars were engaging with human populations in the Amazon basin. The article ends with a consideration of retroactive human attempts to process jaguar presence, including reactions by Jesuits, indigenous converts, and jaguar-shamans. The evidence marshaled here shows that jaguars did indeed fuel Catholicism in this corner of the world, but not exactly in the way that the Jesuit Montoya portrayed. Jaguars did not show themselves to be of uniform mind about boosting the ranks of either Christianity or indigenous religions. They were, quite literally, the wild card in a human game. Yet their predatory actions in Paraguay and the Moxos did succeed in altering religious membership.

I. Jaguars, Jesuits and Converts

In 1713, in the lowlands of the Amazon River basin in what is today Bolivia, Jesuit Alonso Messia reported the success of missionary efforts among the Moxos Indians only three decades after the establishment of the first mission there. "[The Moxos Indians] are so well instructed in the appreciation of [Christian] Salvation . . . that whenever they are going to absent themselves from the town, they confess first," Messia wrote. But he then proceeded to credit more than Jesuit instructors for filling churches. He continued:

> [They come] to the Church to partake of the sacraments of confession and communion to ensure by this their safety during trips, and to protect themselves from dangers, or contingencies, that arise on the paths, that

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Consequences of the Conquest of Mexico (New York: Cambridge University, 1994). Melville goes so far as to say: "It is clear, moreover, that although European-like landscapes did not develop in the hinterlands of Latin America's high civilizations, the biological status quo was not maintained either. The indigenous species of the New World did not triumph over the invaders as in Asia, where the Europeans and their animals and plants barely gained a foothold" (2).

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> usually traverse mountains and unpopulated fields, *where Jaguars live, fierce[,] bloody and cruel, who are the fear of all of this land*.[18]

Who were these fearsome jaguars, and were they really so much of a threat to humans that they contributed to church attendance?

The word used most often to describe this animal in Jesuit records is the Spanish "tigre," but anthropologists and historians have identified it from early physical descriptions and from its habitat as the jaguar, or *Panthera onca*.[19] The jaguar is the third biggest felid or predatory cat in the world after the tiger and lion, and it is the largest in the Western Hemisphere. As suggested from the wide swath of North, Central and South America referenced above, jaguars have an enormous range of nearly a million square miles.[20] Historically they have been found as far north as the southwestern United States and Mexico, throughout much of Central America especially Belize, and as far south as Paraguay and northern Argentina. This geographical expanse encompasses several different ecosystems including semi-deciduous and rain forests, tropical lowlands, and the environment most considered here: the seasonally flooded alluvial plains and grassy marshlands of the Pantanal zone between Paraguay and Brazil (home to the Paraguay missions), and the Beni savannas and Chaco region of Bolivia (home to the Moxos missions).[21]

Today's common term, "jaguar," comes from the word "yaguareté" in the language of the Tupí and the Guaraní, two indigenous groups of Brazil and Paraguay who lived in the southern range of this animal.[22] But missionaries

[18]"Estan tan instruidos en el aprecio de la Salvacion, y cuidan tanto de esto, q en qualquier ausencia q ayan de haser del Pueblo, se confiesan primero; viniendo a la Yglesia a prevenirse con los sacramentos de la confesion y communion para emprender con esta seguridad el viage; y para librarse de los peligros, o contingencias, q pueden ofrecerse en los caminos, q de ordinario son por montes y campos despoblados, donde habitan Tigres, fieras sangrientas y crueles, q son el pavor de espanto de toda esta tierra." Alonso Messia, S. J. *Relación of the Moxos Missions [1713].* Archivum Romanum Societatis Iesu [ARSI], Peru 21 (*Peruana Historia Tomo III 1633–1700*), f. 178v.

[19]William M. Denevan, *The Aboriginal Cultural Geography of the Llanos de Mojos of Bolivia*. (Berkeley: University of California, 1966), 45.

[20]As part of a plan to preserve jaguar populations, the organization *Panthera* is currently trying to create a "jaguar corridor" that would safely allow passage to ninety distinct jaguar populations across 182 separate corridors and eighteen nations, in an effort to encourage enough breeding to save the declining species. Jaguars will wander hundreds of miles to breed. Sharon Guynup, "The Jaguar Freeway," *Smithsonian Magazine* (October 2011), http://www.smithsonianmag.com/science-nature/the-jaguar-freeway-73586097/?no-ist=&utm_campaign=2011-October&page=1.

[21]Bart J. Harmsen, Rebecca J. Foster, Scott C. Silver, Linde E. T. Ostro and C. Patrick Doncaster, "The Ecology of Jaguars in the Cockscomb Basin Wildlife Sanctuary, Belize," in *Biology and Conservation of Wild Felids,* ed. David W. Macdonald and Andrew Loveridge (New York: Oxford University, 2010), 408.

[22]Laura Redish and Orrin Lewis, "Native American Jaguar Mythology," *Native Languages of the Americas* (1998–2015), http://www.native-languages.org/legends-jaguar.htm.

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coming from Europe and posted to diverse frontiers would have encountered a variety of local terms for it, such as the Nahuatl word "ocelotl" and the Yucatec Maya "balam." Europeans were not likely to have encountered a jaguar before arriving to the Americas. Jesuits used the word "tiger" to describe it. Those large cats from India and Asia were entrenched in the European imaginary, rendered in art most often in hunting scenes. Hunting galleries inspired at least one engraver, Antonio Tempesta, to produce copies of images of large predatory cats that had much wider circulation than royal art collections.[23] Illustrations of tigers were also featured in medieval bestiaries, catalogs of wild and mystical beasts where tigers sometimes got their own chapter.[24] Bestiary references and drawings in Europe were usually fanciful representations of the animal that exaggerated salient features such as spots or stripes.[25] Realistic renderings of tigers did exist at the time, but they do not seem to have been in wide circulation.[26]

The collection of real animals to furnish European curiosity cabinets and botanical and zoological research began in earnest in the seventeenth century, when a jaguar was first donated for this purpose to the gardens of Dutch Count Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen during his occupation of Brazil.[27] Real tigers were almost as uncommon in European-owned

[23]The Flemish painter Peter Paul Rubens (1577–1640) painted at least one tiger hunt that was owned by a French collector, Jean de Julienne, and that was used by seventeenth-century painters Charles Parrocel, Louis Desplaces and Nicolas Lancret to compose a series of exotic hunt paintings commissioned by King Louis XV of France. It was Louis XV's hunting gallery that inspired Tempesta. In terms of realism, Parrocel's and Desplaces's tigers were represented as large spotted cats that actually resemble jaguars or leopards more than tigers proper. Lancret's tiger is depicted realistically. F. Hamilton Hazlehurst, "The Wild Beasts Pursued: The *Petite Galerie* of Louis XV at Versailles," *The Art Bulletin* 66, no. 2 (June 1984): 227–228.

[24]J. L. Schrader, "A Medieval Bestiary," *The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin* 44, no. 1 (Summer 1986): 14–15; also Helmut Nickel, "Presents to Princes: A Bestiary of Strange and Wondrous Beasts, Once Known, Forgotten, and Rediscovered," *Metropolitan Museum Journal* 26 (1991): 137n18.

[25]Katherine Acheson, "The Picture of Nature: Seventeenth-Century Aesop's Fables," *Journal for Early Modern Cultural Studies* 9, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2009): 31.

[26]For instance, in Persia in 1672, a Safavid artist, Mu'in Musavvir, painted "Tiger Attacking a Youth," a realistic and horrifying illustration of a recent incident in the artist Musavvir's life in which a Siberian tiger, given as a gift to the Shah of Isfahan, tore off half the face of a young grocer's assistant who was a bystander. Massumeh Farhad, "An Artist's Impression: Mu'in Mussavir's 'Tiger Attacking a Youth,' " *Muqarnas* 9 (1992): 116–123. Such journalistic-type drawings were less common in Europe, though in the seventeenth century there was a growing market for accurate depictions of exotic flora and fauna of the New World in particular. Linda Kalof, *Looking at Animals in Human History* (London: Reaktion Books Ltd., 2007), 72–75 on curiosity cabinets; 119–121 on the handful of European menageries that were open to the public in the seventeenth century.

[27]"There were also brought there all the castes of birds and animals that could be found, and as the inhabitants of the land knew [Maurits's] condition and appetite, each one brought the bird, or the strange animal which he could find in the interior, there they brought parrots, araras, jacis, canindés, jaboris, mutuns, Guinea fowl, ducks, swans, peacocks, turkeys and chickens [in] great number, so many pigeons, that one couldn't count them, there they had tigers, the *onça* [the jaguar], the

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menageries. Tigers had been among the regular exotic imports of ancient Rome,[28] but they were kept in captivity comparatively rarely in Europe before 1800.[29] The city of Florence was one notable exception. There, inspired by the zoological gardens kept by Muslim rulers, nobles funded the largest menagerie in fifteenth-century Italy, which included tigers, bears, leopards which were used for hunting, and twenty-five lions housed in the Palazzo Vecchio itself.[30] Still, lions outnumbered tigers in that collection and in other cities of early modern Europe, with live lions kept and ceremonially displayed by the cities of Ghent and Venice in the fifteenth century.[31]

Lions also cropped up often in the Bible and the lives of the Christian saints, such as Saint Mark the evangelist, who was represented as a winged lion in Venetian iconography.[32] In medieval bestiaries, lions were associated with Christ himself: lion cubs were depicted as being born dead, with the cub's father having to breathe in its face after three days to bring it to life, evoking the three days between Jesus's crucifixion and resurrection.[33] In some hagiographies, lions were often "endowed by reason" to protect or spare the lives of Christian saints.[34] The most celebrated example of this was the

suçuarana, the tamanduá, the búgio, the quati, the saguim, the apeteá, Cape Verde goats, Angolan sheep, the cuita, the paca, the anta, the wild pig, a great multitude of rabbits, and finally there was no curious thing in Brazil that they did not have there, because the inhabitants sent them with good will." Manuel Calado, *O Valoroso Lucideno* [1648], as quoted in Maria Angélica da Silva and Melissa Mota Alcides, "Collecting and Framing the Wilderness: The Garden of Johan Maurits (1605–79) in North-East Brazil," *Garden History* 30, no. 2 (Winter 2002): 167.

[28]Live tigers also appear to have been less common than live lions in the stocking of the Roman gladitorial games; in fact, even ancient Romans were more likely to run across exotic animal products such as lion skins or elephant tusks than the animals themselves. Christopher Epplet, "The Capture of Animals by the Roman Military," *Greece and Rome* 48, no. 2 (October 2001): 210–222. Also: Grant Parker, "Ex Oriente Luxuria: Indian Commodities and Roman Experience," *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient* 45, no. 1 (Spring 2002): 51. And: Charles D. Cuttler, "Exotics in Post-Medieval European Art: Giraffes and Centaurs," *Artibus et Historiae* 12, no. 23 (1991): 161.

[29]In 1475, the Duchess of Savoy in Turin kept a live tiger, the first recorded one since Roman times; there was a surge in exotic imports in the seventeenth century, when a tiger was notably unloaded in Amsterdam in July of 1633 with much publicity. But these cases were still rare and centered on cities and ports. Cuttler, "Exotics," 161, 170.

[30]Erik Ringmar, "Audience for a Giraffe: European Expansionism and the Quest for the Exotic," *Journal of World History* 17, no. 4 (December 2006): 381.

[31]Cuttler, "Exotics," 161.

[32]St. Mark's association with the winged lion is derived from a Biblical verse about a prophetic vision of the apocalypse, Revelation 4:7: "The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle." These creatures have been taken as symbols of the four evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

[33]Kalof, *Looking at Animals,* 46–47.

[34]Dominic Alexander, *Saints and Animals in the Middle Ages* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 2008), 18. Alexander includes the examples of a late-antique Egyptian hermit who tried to get himself killed by a lion in remorse for a sin, but the lion refused to kill him, thus showing the hermit that God had forgiven him. He also references a monk of Sapsas who was so favored by

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eleventh-century hagiography of Saint Jerome, who befriended a lion in a fashion reminiscent of the earlier second-century Roman story of Androcles and the lion. In the popular Roman fable of the condemned slave Androcles, a lion refused to eat him in the arena because Androcles had helped to pull a thorn from its paw. Similarly, Saint Jerome was credited with taming a lion in the wilderness, and the lion became part of his Christian iconography.[35]

Given all of these references to lions, it is interesting that Jesuits in the Moxos and Paraguay chose "tiger" instead of "lion" to describe jaguars. Perhaps this was partly motivated by a desire for verisimilitude.[36] Jaguars, like the tigers in European illustrations, had distinctive markings on their skins. Beyond using the word "tiger," the Jesuits endeavored to impart what jaguars were actually like to their European audiences through firsthand description. For the Jesuit Montoya, writing of Paraguay in the 1630s, hunting prowess was the jaguar's most arresting feature. In a short chapter called "Some Animals," he listed jaguars as "tigers," including them almost as an afterthought to two pages devoted to venomous snakes, evidently a more common danger to humans. Montoya introduced his readers to jaguars by recounting how a pair of jaguars jointly targeted a hog that had been trying to hide in the water. One jaguar jumped underwater to tackle this prey. "Out of curiosity I started saying Hail Marys," Montoya related. "[W]hen I had got to the sixth, the tiger emerged with his prey already dead."[37]

A century and a half later in the Moxos missions, François-Xavier Eder also invoked the might of jaguars, introducing his European readers to the jaguar by referring to the size of its pelt.[38] "Jaguars are much bigger than the skins that are

God that he was able to welcome lions into his cave (20). It should also be noted, however, that lions in the Bible occasionally also denoted the devil, as in I Peter 5:8: "your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about" (24–25).

[35]Alexander, *Saints and Animals*, 21. The second-century apocryphal *Acts of Paul* also related a similar story of Thecla, who was saved by a lioness who jumped to protect her from other beasts in the arena (24), and Paul the hermit, whose grave was dug by solicitous lions who emerged from the wilderness for this sacred purpose (35).

[36]Kalof argues that what was distinctive to the Renaissance (1400–1600) and Enlightenment (1600–1800) periods, in contrast to the earlier Medieval period, was "the penchant for realistic representation of animals," supported by European exploration, the printing press, and the emergence of science. Kalof, *Looking at Animals,* 72.

[37]Montoya, *The Spiritual Conquest*, 34.

[38]Eder's attention to jaguar skins foreshadows the intensified trade in jaguar skins in the eighteenth century, though it is not clear from Eder's account whether Moxos Indians were contributing to this trade by hunting jaguars. Felix Azara, an eighteenth-century Spaniard, tallied two thousand jaguars killed annually in the La Plata River Valley in Argentina. But the trade in jaguar pelts was widespread even earlier, with the Inca of Peru using jaguar skins as official emblems and uniforms for warriors, and Aztec high-ranking nobles and warriors also wearing them ceremonially, to such an extent that the trade in them may have contributed to the near-extermination of jaguars in Mexico and Central America in pre-Colombian times; genetic

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put today on race horses would have you think," Eder explained. "I believe this is because [the skins seen in Europe] must come from Africa, or if they do come from Brazil or some other region of America, that just proves that there the jaguars are surely smaller than those from [the Moxos missions]."[39] It is not evident where Eder has seen jaguar skins used on racehorses. The Hussars or heavy cavalry from Poland in the early modern period wore tiger and leopard skins or rugs with that pattern over their shoulders as part of their battle uniform.[40] Writing centuries later about the gauchos or cattle ranchers in the pampas of Argentina that lie closer to Eder's missions, author Jorge Luis Borges mentioned horse saddle blankets trimmed in jaguar skin as a mark of wealth.[41] But in light of the large number of hunting paintings and engravings popular in Europe, Eder might have been referring readers to tiger, not jaguar, pelts that were slung over horses as trophies after the hunt.[42]

Eder devoted much more space to jaguars than his colleague Montoya. Montoya had worked in the Jesuit reductions in Paraguay for twenty-five years, from 1612 until 1637, acting as superior to the Guaraní missions during his last two years of service. He wrote and published his account of this region after the fact, in Spain, as part of a plea to the Spanish court to defend the Paraguay Indians from slave-raiding *bandeirantes,* and to justify some of his own controversial leadership decisions.[43] In light of this human-centered agenda, Montoya mentioned jaguars only in passing. Eder, on the other hand, left a firsthand description of the Moxos missions that he

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research indicates that the population of Central American jaguars was restored by an influx of jaguars from South America. Alan Rabinowitz, *An Indomitable Beast: The Remarkable Journey of the Jaguar* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 2014), 45–6, 62, 64.

[39]"Par ailleurs, les jaguars sont beaucoup plus grands que ce que laisseraient croire les peaux qui sont aujourd'hui mises sur les chevaux de course; c'est pourqoui je pense que ces dernières proviennent d'Afrique, ou si c'est du Brésil ou d'une autre region d'Amérique, cela prouve que là-bas les jaguars sont sûrement plus petits que ceux du Pérou [le territoire de l'actuelle Bolivie.. où vivait le Père Eder]." François-Xavier Eder, *Missionnaire en Amazonie: Récit du dix-huitième siècle d'un jésuite au Pérou, en Bolivie et dans les réductions indiennes* [1791], trans. Joseph Laure (Paris: L'Harmattan, 2009), 203.

[40]Barbara Ghelfi and Michael J. Abromaitis, "Letters," *Master Drawings* 42, no. 2 (Summer 2004): 179. Tiger skin saddle blankets were also part of the kit of medieval Japanese cavalry in the fourteenth century, though these would have been far from Eder's purview. Thomas Conlan, "Review of *Armed Martial Arts of Japan: Swordsmanship and Archery,* by G. Cameron Hurst," *Monumenta Nipponica* 54, no. 1 (Spring 1999): 164.

[41]This reference is from Borges's 1946 short story, "El Muerto." See: E. D. Carter, Jr., "Women in the Short Stories of Jorge Luis Borges," *Pacific Coast Philology* 14 (October 1979): 14.

[42]Notably, Tempesta's seventeenth-century engravings of lion hunts show "leopard-skin covering" on horses involved in the hunt. Hazlehurst, "The Wild Beasts Pursued," 230, fig. 15.

[43]In 1631, when Montoya was serving as superior to these missions, he relocated twelve thousand Guaraní Indians down the Paranapanemá River to escape raids from slavers from São Paolo, Brazil. Clement McNaspy, S. J., "Montoya's Life," in Montoya, *The Spiritual Conquest*, 15, 18; for Montoya's own account of this exodus: 104–113.

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completed retrospectively in Slovakia at much more leisure, after the Society of Jesus was expelled from South America in 1768. Eder had served as a missionary to the Moxos for fifteen years since his first posting there in 1753 at the age of twenty-six.[44] He devoted one quarter of his lengthy 280-page report to listing the flora and fauna of the Moxos region.

Eder wrote of trees, plants and medicinal spices; mammals including the tapir, capybara, pigs, and monkeys; fish and snakes; insects including ants, spiders and scorpions; birds, turtles, and crocodiles. Within this Noah's Ark-style inventory, only three animals were allotted their own separate elongated, multi-chapter sections: snakes, crocodiles, and "tigers," the trio of predators that he felt were most threatening to humans. Eder devoted twenty-two subchapters to the cats he called tigers, the most space given to any predator or animal in his account. He identified three different "tiger" species that roamed around the missions: the "tigre fauve," or tawny tiger (identified by scholars as the puma or American mountain lion); the "tigre noir," or black tiger (the panther); and the "tigre tacheté," or spotted tiger (the jaguar). Of these three, the last one—the jaguar—is the only one that Eder singled out as a killer of humans. Montoya had referred to the human-killing capacity of jaguars when describing the incident at the reduction of Santo Tomé that opened this article. But Eder belabored it. He reported: "It is rare that a year passes without several Indians falling prey to jaguars. There is one reduction here where in a single night, this beast killed seventeen people . . . the flesh and blood of humans please it that much!"[45]

Eder's ready characterization of jaguars as man-eaters would be a surprise to today's conservationists, who separate jaguars from other felids as the least likely to kill or attack humans without provocation. In Brazil in June 2008, when a jaguar killed a young fisherman who was sleeping in his tent, the national media reported it as "the first officially documented, unprovoked fatal attack of a jaguar on a human in Brazil," whereas earlier attacks had been the result of jaguars being cornered, injured, or defending their cubs.[46] Jaguars today are listed as "opportunistic predators," carnivores with highly

[44]He spent most of that time in the reduction of San Martin de Baures, one of the more remote settlements. Eder, *Missionnaire en Amazonie,* 10–11.

[45]"Il est rare que passe une année sans que quelques Indiens ne soient la proie du jaguar. Il y a une reduction dans laquelle, en une seule nuit, ce fauve tua dix-sept personnes. Mais le pire est qu'après avoir goûté, ne serait-ce qu'une fois, à l'homme, le jaguar délaisse tous les autres animaux, même s'il les a à sa portée et qu'il est sur le point de mourir de faim. Car la chair et le sang humains lui plaisent tant!" Eder, *Missionnaire en Amazonie,* 205.

[46]Sandra M. C. Cavalcanti, Silvio Marchini, Alexndra Zimmerman, Eric M. Gese, and David W. Macdonald, "Jaguars, Livestock, and People in Brazil: Realities and Perceptions Behind the Conflict," in *Biology and Conservation of Wild Felids,* ed. David W. Macdonald and Andrew Loveridge (New York: Oxford University, 2010), 395.

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variable diets that include more than eighty-five different prey species.[47] However, as Eder noted in a particularly graphic description of a jaguar taking down a horse, some of this prey could be quite large.[48] Scientists have gathered a list of possible conditions that would cause a jaguar to diverge from easier, smaller prey to attack larger animals: depletion of smaller prey; human encroachment on its habitat; or dispersal of lone jaguars outside of their normal range and into marginal, sparsely populated habitats.[49] Which of these preconditions existed in the Paraguay and Moxos missions? More pointedly, why were jaguars preying on humans?

Human encroachment and intensified human competition over small prey could have been factors in an eighteenth-century increase in jaguar attacks, but actually, at the time of establishment of the Jesuit missions, human population in this region was comparatively low. Jesuit plans for mission settlements did gather people together into larger communities than in previous decades when villages had been kept small, partly as an adaptive response to flooding.[50] But people had been living in the Amazon lowlands for centuries before the Jesuits entered that eco-zone, and in some periods, in much larger densities.[51] Over the century of Jesuit presence in the missions,

[47]These species mostly include peccaries, deer, large rodents, armadillos, and coatis, but they also target cattle weighing up to 200 kilograms. Harmsen et al., "The Ecology of Jaguars," 412.

[48]"Un jaguar avait tué un cheval bien nourri, qui servait son maître depuis déjà de nombreuses années. Et comme ce n'était pas très loin de la mission, le fauve, craignant pour sa vie, décida d'emporter sa proie dans un endroit plus sûr. De l'autre côté du fleuve, il y avait un bosquet, à environ mille pas (à peu près 1 400 mètres) de ce dernier. Donc, en plantant les griffes d'une de ses pattes dans le cheval, le jaguar entreprit le chemin vers le fleuve qui était proche, en traînant ainsi sa proie. À l'endroit où il arriva, après avoir traverse à la nage le fleuve, la rive avait sept ou huit verges (environ 6 à 7 mètres) de haut et était si abrupte que tu aurais cru qu'un chien n'aurait pu la gravir qu'avec peine. Or le fauve, s'accrochant avec trois pattes et tirant sa proie avec la quatrième, non seulement arriva au sommet, mais ensuite parcourut l'espace jusqu'au bosquet, puis arrivé là il mangea le cheval." Eder, *Missionnaire en Amazonie,* 205. Eder also records cases of jaguars breaking cows' necks (204) and defeating crocodiles (205).

[49]Andrew J. Loveridge, Sonam W. Wang, Laurence G. Frank, and John Seidensticker, "People and Wild Felids: Conservation of Cats and Management of Conflicts," in *Biology and Conservation of Wild Felids*, ed. David W. Macdonald and Andrew Loveridge (New York: Oxford University, 2010), 175–176.

[50]For instance, the earliest mission settlement among the Moxos, Loreto, had an estimated population of 6,000 in the late 1690s, versus the smaller villages of one to two hundred people that the Jesuits found when they made their first entries to this region. On pre-Jesuit Moxos settlement patterns, see: David Block, *Mission Culture on the Upper Amazon: Native Tradition, Jesuit Enterprise, & Secular Policy in Moxos, 1660–1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1994), 26. For the population of the Loreto mission, estimated by a visiting friar, see: 1698 *Relation authentica Fr. Francisco de Torres ex ordine Praedicatorum do Statu nostrarum Missionum de los Moxos*, ARSI Peru 21, ff. 113v-114v.

[51]Between 300 and 800 A.D., archaeologists estimate that the population of the Moxos region peaked at 350,000, more than ten times higher than the population sustained there at the height of the Jesuit mission period, c. 1700. The ancestors of the Moxos Indians were able to sustain this permanent population through terraplaning the landscape and digging drainage canals to stave off the effects of flooding. Ricardo Céspedes Paz, "Moxos: Un esplenderoso pasado," in

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the population of the region actually dropped drastically due to disease epidemics,[52] Portuguese capture of Indians as slaves, and flight and relocation of surviving Indians.[53]

As for European immigrant populations, the Paraguay and Moxos missions were famously remote from Spanish and Portuguese colonial urban centers. The Paraguay missions were awkwardly located in between Spanish and Portuguese imperial jurisdiction.[54] To get to the Paraguay missions from Europe, Jesuits frequently transited through the Spanish port city of Buenos Aires, traveling "more than 200 leagues" or seven hundred miles down the Paraguay River to the administrative capital of the province, Asunción, which Montoya described as home to "fewer than four hundred citizens" in the mid-1600s.[55] Asunción was more than five hundred miles from the closest Jesuit reduction of Espiritu Santo, which took another three months of grueling travel to reach, involving long stretches by boat on the Paraná River interspersed with week-long overland portages around waterfalls and through swamps.[56] Other than Asunción, the significantly larger Peruvian outpost of Potosí lay more than 1,700 miles to the west of the Paraguay reductions, and the Portuguese city of São Paolo lay roughly eight hundred miles to the east.[57] Located still farther afield, the Moxos missions lay nearly two thousand miles west of the viceregal capital of Peru, Lima, a distance that took more than one year's travel by foot to traverse.[58] To the east, the Spanish settlement of Santa Cruz was closer but still three hundred miles

Los Bolivianos en el Tiempo, ed. Alberto Crespo, José Crespo Fernández, and María Luisa Kent Solares (La Paz, Bolivia: Instituto de Estudios Andinos y Amazónicos, 1995), 51.

[52]Using Jesuit tallies of converted Christian populations in the region, the approximate population of people settled across the Jesuit missions of the Moxos was at its highest at 35,000 in 1737, but had dropped to 20,000 people six decades later, by 1797. These people were dispersed across twenty-five mission towns. For Jesuit population tallies, see: Ramón Gutierrez da Costa and Rodrigo Gutiérrez Viñuales, "Territorio, Urbanismo y Arquitectura en Moxos y Chiquitos," in *Las Misiones Jesuíticas de Chiquitos*, ed. Pedro Querejazu (La Paz, Bolivia: Fundacion BHN, 1995), 331. David Block gives a much more conservative estimate of a stable, mean population of around 11,500 at the six first mission settlements over the early 1700s. Block, *Mission Culture*, 83–84.

[53]Carlos Fausto, *Warfare and Shamanism in Amazonia* (New York: Cambridge University, 2012), 19, 21n5, 22.

[54]When the Spanish and Portuguese clarified the border in the Treaty of Limits of 1750, the Jesuit missions were forced to move to remain under Spanish protection. The anger of the Indians at this decision led to their resistance in the Guaraní Wars of the 1750s. The sympathy of Jesuits who loudly voiced their disapproval led indirectly to the Jesuits being expelled from Portuguese and Spanish dominions in 1759 and 1767, respectively.

[55]Montoya, *The Spiritual Conquest*, 30.

[56]Montoya, *The Spiritual Conquest,* 38.

[57]Montoya, *The Spiritual Conquest*, 35.

[58]Block, *Mission Culture*, 110–111. In 1717–1718, the overland trek from Lima to the Moxos region took about fourteen months. One had to cross the coastal desert, ascend the western

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away, requiring two months of travel to reach.[59] Nor were settler incursions into the area of the missions significant enough to threaten jaguar populations, especially when compared to today's human threat to jaguar habitat.[60] In fact, the eighteenth-century jaguar attacks might reflect that jaguar population, not human population, was on the rise. Understudied factors such as small changes in climate or alterations to other parts of the food chain may have caused a jump in jaguar numbers that left some of these predators hungry and drifting. Unfortunately there is little data available about such details for this time period.

There is one change to jaguar habitat that is documented repeatedly in the historical record for this era, however: the arrival of new, "large, meaty prey" of the sort preferred by jaguars—cattle.[61] The Spanish Jesuit Cipriano Barace brought the first cattle out to the Moxos region in the late 1600s as part of a Jesuit program to encourage indigenous converts to settle in one place instead of ranging far into the mountains to hunt meat for their families as they traditionally had.[62] In Paraguay in the 1630s, the Jesuit Montoya also explicitly mentioned the impact of new cattle populations on jaguars when he wrote, "The [jaguars] that breed in those lands are past counting because of the vast quantity of wild cattle available to them; this is so great that a cow can be purchased there for what a chicken costs here."[63] Outside of the Paraguay and Moxos missions, Jesuits in the Bolivian

Andes, traverse the high plain and descend again through tropical forest to reach the savanna where the Moxos missions were located.

[59]Travel was so grueling that one Jesuit layman, José del Castillo, died in 1688 trying to find an easier connecting route between the Moxos missions and Cochabamba, the closest Spanish settlement to the north. Gutiérrez & Gutiérrez, "Territorio," 345.

[60]The high growth rate of human populations is cited as a reason for jaguar population decline today in Chiapas, Mexico, and in western Brazil. Nashieli Garcia-Alaniz, Eduardo Jorge Naranjo and Frank F. Mallory, "Human-Felid Interactions in Three Mestizo Communities of the Selva Lacandona, Chiapas, Mexico: Benefits, Conflicts and Traditional Uses of Species," *Human Ecology* 38, no. 3 (June 2010): 451–457. Also: Fernando Cesar Cascelli de Azevedo and Dennis L. Murray, "Evaluation of Potential Factors Predisposing Livestock to Predation by Jaguars," *The Journal of Wildlife Management* 71, no. 7 (September 2007): 2379–2386.

[61]Rabinowitz, *An Indomitable Beast*, 185.

[62]Barace herded two hundred animals including cows, mules and horses from the town of Santa Cruz to the Moxos mission of Trinidad, a four-hundred-kilometer trek that took them fifty-four days; only eighty-six animals survived the journey, but this was enough to begin stock-breeding in the region. Barace was honored for his cattle-herding feat with a 1986 commemorative postage stamp in Bolivia. See: Peter Fennessy, S.J., "Father Cipriano Barace, SJ," *Jesuit Stamps* (2015), http://www.manresa-sj.org/stamps/1_Barace.htm. On the impact of Barace's livestock, see: Massimo Livi Bacci, *El Dorado in the Marshes: Gold, Slaves and Souls Between the Andes and the Amazon* (Malden, Mass.: Polity, 2010), 137. Cattle ranching flourished outside the missions as well, especially in the grasslands of eastern Amazonia; see: Fausto, *Warfare and Shamanism*, 23.

[63]Montoya, *The Spiritual Conquest,* 34.

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foothills of the Andes wrote of jaguars as a threat not to humans, but to the cattle in their ranches.[64] Jaguars appear to have been just starting to learn how to hunt this new prey. Eder recorded the novelty of targeting cattle for at least one jaguar, who had an unfortunate run-in with a large bull in which the bull bested the jaguar—one of very few instances in Eder's account in which jaguars lost a confrontation with another animal.[65] Today, research shows that jaguars' taste for cattle has been finely honed since the eighteenth century, with jaguar predation on livestock now cited as the top reason for conflict between humans and jaguars.[66]

Cattle meat may have been a new and preferred target for jaguars, but in the late 1760s, what Eder highlighted instead in his account of the Moxos missions were their attacks on humans. Rather than suspecting Eder of exaggeration or insidiously clever Jesuit proselytizing agenda, it is worth noting that historical tallies of predator attacks on the frontier have been taken seriously with fruitful results in recent studies.[67] Here it suffices to conclude,

[64]"Nadie posee [esta propiedad 'La Coca'] por estar muy distante del Pueblo [Samaipata] que no se compone sino de montañas y peñascos, y un hormiguero de tierras como es de tigres, onzas y otros insectos venenosos por lo que se halla despoblada y desamparada." *Juan Saavedra contra José Padilla* [c. 1640], Archivo y Biblioteca Nacionales de Bolivia [ABNB] EC1811.43, F30, f. 9v. Also in Bolivia, the Society of Jesus inventories list a property bordering the Guapay River that they called "Estancia del Tigre" because of the "tigres" or jaguars that frequently attacked the cattle there. See: *La Compañía de Jesus, sobre el reconocimiento de la medida y composicíon de unas tierras en Tomina* [c. 1640], ABNB EC1665.30, F90. Special thanks to Nathan Weaver Olson in the Department of History at the University of Minnesota for these references.

[65]"Les taureaux sont les seuls que ce fauve n'ose pas attaquer, à moins qu'ils ne soient couches par terre. Et à son tour le taureu est le seul à ne pas fuir à la vue du jaguar et à ne montrer aucune marque de peur. Au contraire, il continue à paître derrière le fauve en mugissant et en grattant le sol avec sa patte. Un jour, on découvrit un taureau qui s'était jeté avec tant de violence sur un jaguar, qu'il le transportait transpercé et mort sur ses cornes, jusqu'à ce que des Indiens le délivrent de son si glorieux fardeau." Eder, *Missionnaire en Amazonie*, 204. Jaguar expert Alan Rabinowitz reports that because jaguar prefer larger prey, it is fairly common for them to be caused injury by their targeted dinners, including peccaries, tapirs or caimans. Rabinowitz, *An Indomitable Beast*, 185. But in European artwork in the seventeenth century, actually, lions attacking bulls where a popular motif in art, occasionally conveying political messages, but emphasizing with vivid and gruesome detail the lion's triumph over the bull. See, for instance, a bronze statue, "Lion Attacking a Bull," attributed to either Antonio Susini (1572–1624) or Giovanni Francesco Susini (c. 1585-c. 1653). Kalof, *Looking at Animals*, 110–111.

[66]In a 2010 study of Brazil's southern Pantanal, 46% of jaguar kills were found to be cattle (Cavalcanti et al., "Jaguars, Livestock and People," 389). Still, as compared to other felids such as tigers, leopards, lions, lynx, puma and cheetah, Loveridge et al. show jaguars to be among the least likely to target cattle. Yet recently in southern Amazonia, Brazil, in a single year, ranchers paid professional predator hunters to kill 110–150 jaguars and pumas to address the perceived threat to their livestock. Loveridge et al., "People and Wild Felids," 169 table 6.1, 164.

[67]"The expedition encountered many kinds of wildlife, but the grizzlies were the most dangerous and frightening . . . As a result, the members of the expedition were especially alert to the presence of grizzlies, and we can believe that their reports of these bears were quite accurate." Daniel B. Botkin, "Thirty-Seven Grizzly Bears in the Wilderness: Knowing What's There, When, and How Many," in Daniel B. Botkin, *Our Natural History: The Lessons of Lewis and Clark* (New York:

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from Eder's report and other Jesuit records, that enough actual jaguar attacks on humans occurred in the missions of Paraguay and the Moxos to make a deep impression on the people living there. Precise numbers are not as important as the psychological impact of repeated jaguar attacks at this historic place and time. David Quammen assesses the phenomenon of human interactions with man-eating predators similarly. It is not the quantity of attacks that mattered, but the paradigm-shattering point they conveyed. "Every once in a while, a monstrous carnivore emerged like doom from a forest or river to kill someone and feed on the body," Quammen explains. "It was a familiar sort of disaster—like auto fatalities today—that must have seemed freshly, shockingly gruesome each time, despite the familiarity. And it conveyed a certain message. Among the earliest forms of human self-awareness was the awareness of being meat."[68]

Who was potential meat for the jaguars around the Paraguay and Moxos missions, and what were they predisposed to think about jaguars? Standing alongside cattle in the jaguars' novelty food line were the Jesuits, a relatively new arrival to the missionary playing field of the Americas. The Society of Jesus was founded in the 1530s by a Basque ex-soldier, Ignatius Loyola, and its first ranks included missionaries such as Francis Xavier, whose successes in Asia brought the Jesuits widespread recognition. Following the footsteps of these giants, early Jesuits predicated their identity on a desire to be more zealous in their global outreach, more devoted to the Pope, more educated in theology, and more innovative in their evangelizing methods than older missionary orders such as the Franciscans. Their ranks grew exponentially in their first century. In 1609, when the Jesuits first arrived on the banks of the Paraná River to establish the Paraguayan missions, and certainly by 1682, when they arrived in the upper Amazon River basin to found their first mission among the Moxos, Jesuit membership was drawn from across Europe and the Americas.[69] Two of the Jesuits cited here, Antonio Ruiz de

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Oxford University, 2004), 61. Two remote sensing scientists have corroborated Botkin's interpretation in their study, where they refined his measure of grizzly bear density and also used Lewis and Clark's journals to assess the influence of humans on nine other mammals that they wrote of often (their prey): white-tailed deer, elk, bison, pronghorn antelope, bighorn sheep, grizzly bear, black bear, wolf, and beaver. See: Andrea S. Laliberte and William J. Ripple, "Wildlife Encounters by Lewis & Clark: A Spatial Analysis of Interactions between Native Americans and Wildlife," *BioScience* 53:10 (October 2003): 994–1003. Special thanks to Patrick Nunnally at the University of Minnesota's River Life Program for calling my attention to these studies.

[68]Quammen, *Monster of God*, 3.

[69]The first of thirty reductions that the Jesuits established in Paraguay was San Ignacio Guazú, officially founded in 1609. In the Moxos, the first of twenty-five reductions was Loreto, founded in 1682. On the multilingual, pan-imperial and international membership of the Jesuits, see: Luke Clossey, *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions* (New York: Cambridge University, 2011), especially 33–37 regarding "which Jesuits were German?"

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Montoya and Alonso Messia, were Spanish-speakers born and trained in Peru. François-Xavier Eder was born in Slovakia, and wrote primarily in German, Hungarian and Latin; his colleague, Martín Dobrizhoffer of Austria, was also a German-speaker who published in Latin. These men went through extensive training before being posted in teams and small groups to the Paraguayan and Moxos frontiers.

For the purpose of this analysis, what matters most is distilling from their varied backgrounds their common attitudes towards the wild beasts they were poised to encounter. Jesuits born in the seventeenth century would have been steeped in largely allegorical Catholic accounts not about jaguars specifically, but about other predatory cats such as the lion. During their novitiate, Jesuits were often read stories of martyrs to ready them for possible sacrifice in the field.[70] Scholar Ingvild Saelid Gilhus notes that what is "special" about Christian texts of the Acts of the Martyrs is that "these sources seldom allow the beasts to kill the martyrs, and [almost never give] descriptions of beasts killing Christians."[71] Gilhus does note the unpredictability of animals in general in a Christian corpus that by and large represents them as part of a "polarized cosmology" in which they are introduced as either an instrument of God, or an instrument of the Devil.[72] For instance, in the martyrdom of Thecla, when she was thrown into the arena, she was attacked by lions and bears and even seals, but one lioness fought to its own death in order to protect her.[73] So some beasts could help and some could hinder.

Yet consider one of the standout accounts of near-martyrdom featuring a lion. It is from the second-century apocryphal Acts of Paul, and it is told about the apostle Paul himself. When Paul was praying in an isolated spot, he was approached by a lion who asked to be baptized by him. Later, Paul was condemned to execution by wild beasts, but the lion released into the stadium was the same one that Paul had baptized. "The lion looked at Paul, and Paul looked at the lion," the story ran. "And borne along by faith Paul said, 'Lion, was it you whom I baptized?' And the lion in answer said to Paul, 'Yes.'"[74] Jesuits who had heard this story would be open to the possibility of encountering a wild cat that might be *Christian*, an animal like

[70]Trent Pomplun notes that during the training of aspiring Jesuits, after dinner Jesuit novices were nightly read lives of the ancient martyrs and letters about present-day martyrs from the field, creating something of a "collective fantasy" for overseas mission postings and also martyrdom. Trent Pomplun, *Jesuit on the Roof of the World: Ippolito Desideri's Mission to Tibet* (New York: Oxford University, 2009), 18, 22.

[71]Ingvild Saelid Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans: Changing Attitudes to Animals in Greek, Roman and Early Christian Ideas* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 184.

[72]Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans*, 191.

[73]Gilhus, *Animals, Gods and Humans,* 192–193.

[74]Hobgood-Oster, *Holy Dogs and Asses,* 53.

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Paul's lion, pre-ordained by God to speak to and to protect Christians. Indeed, the Jesuit Montoya prefaced his report on Paraguay by describing himself "as a desert-dweller in pursuit of wild beasts—the barbarian Indians."[75] Consider the broadness of the category of "wild beasts" to Montoya. It could encompass the converted lion of St. Paul, the tamed lion of St. Jerome, the unconverted Guaraní, or, perhaps, real jaguars.

Also in the front lines of potential prey to jaguars, the range of indigenous peoples in the Jesuit missions of South America in the 1600s and 1700s is even more diverse and difficult to circumscribe than the cosmopolitan membership of the Jesuits. The Paraguay missions were set up as outreach to the Guaraní Indians. The Guaraní belonged to the large Tupian language grouping that included dialects spoken across much of Brazil, Bolivia, French Guiana, Paraguay and Peru, most notably the Tupí on the east coast of Brazil.[76] In spite of the distinctiveness between the dialects of Guaraní and Tupí, because they belong to the same linguistic family, anthropologists have assumed cultural affinities between the two groups. To the northeast, in the Amazon basin, the Moxos missions were established decades later among indigenous peoples of an unrelated language group, South Arawakan. Dialects of the Arawakan language family are spoken in the Upper Amazon, Bolivia, Venezuela, and as far north as the Caribbean. The Moxos Indians were the first to be approached by the Jesuits in this area, but the Jesuit missions there soon extended to include the neighboring Baure, with whom the Jesuit Eder was based. Though the Jesuits attempted to make Moxos into the *lingua franca* of their missions, non-Arawakan indigenous groups who moved into the Moxos reductions included Cayuvava, Itonama, Mobima, Canisania, Sironio, More-Itene, Chacobo, Chimane, Guarayo and Tapacure Indians.[77] Out of this Tower of Babel, there nonetheless loomed some

[75]Montoya, *The Spiritual Conquest,* 29.

[76]On the Tupí-Guaraní "ethos of partnership" with Europeans and their sixteenth- and seventeenth-century "conquest and expansion" along the Rio de la Plata in the Amazon, see: M. Kittiya Lee, "Language and Conquest: Tupí-Guaraní Expansion in the European Colonization of Brazil and Amazonia," in *Iberian Imperialism and Language Evolution in Latin America*, ed. Salikoko S. Mufwene (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2014), 144, 154. Also on how the Jesuits tended to minimize the affinity between Tupí and Guaraní groups to favor the Guaraní with whom they mostly worked, see: Carlos Fausto, "Se Deus Fosse Jaguar: Canibalismo e Cristianismo entre os Guarani (Séculos XVI-XX)," *Mana* 11, no. 2 (2005): 387, 407n2.

[77]In 1680, in their first assessments of the area, the Jesuits tallied six thousand Moxos Indians scattered across seventy villages ranging between sixty and two hundred people. Alfred Métraux, "The Social Organization and Religion of the Mojo and Manasi," *Primitive Man* 16, no. 1 (January-April, 1943): 6–7. For other indigenous groups served by these missions, see: Block, *Mission Culture,* 16–18; 38 for the Chiquitos missions, which were sometimes grouped with the Moxos missions, though I focus on the Moxos settlements here. In 1711, Jesuit Diego Ignacio Fernández noted seven different languages being spoken in these Jesuit settlements in addition to Moxos. "Diego Ignacio Fernández to P. General Michelangelo Tamburini, 21 Sept. 1711," ARSI Peru 21a, f. 125v.

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consensus and traditions around a local predator well known to all of them, the jaguar.[78]

Two attitudes towards the jaguar appear to have been shared by speakers of Tupian and Arawakan languages, in spite of their geographic separation and presumable cultural distinctiveness from one another: first, a reverence for the animal as a spiritual being; and second, the prominent use of the jaguar in religious rituals. Anthropologist Carlos Fausto has studied the centrality of jaguars in religious rituals among the Parakaña of western Brazil, linked by the Tupian language to the seventeenth-century Guaraní of the Paraguay missions.[79] Robin Wright has done similar ethnographic work among the present-day Baniwa of northern Brazil, connected by their Arawakan dialect to the eighteenth-century Moxos-speakers also gathered in Jesuit missions.[80] Fausto and Wright both discuss the importance of jaguars in healing and divination ceremonies of Baniwa and Parakaña shamans.[81] Among both of these peoples, the most powerful and respected shamans are believed to transform into jaguars, a ritual metamorphosis shared with other cultures that have coexisted alongside wildcat populations.[82] For the descendants of the Tupí-Guaraní, Fausto further notes a strong association between jaguars,

[78]The similarities between indigenous practices throughout the range of the jaguars has led jaguar expert Alan Rabinowitz to define a "Jaguar Cultural Corridor" that links "the people of the jaguar, all those whose lives from the Pleistocene onward were shaped by the apex predator . . . The similarities and continuity of practices and beliefs relating to the jaguar that existed among diverse civilizations, separated in space and time, seemed part of a larger cultural consciousness that was as powerful and evocative as the animal itself." (*An Indomitable Beast*, 32) Anthropologist Carlos Fausto is more specific about the cultural practice that tied together diverse indigenous groups across the jaguar's range: "if one concept cutting across geographic, linguistic and cultural boundaries among South American Indians can be singled out, it is that of qualitative identity between jaguars and shamans and accordingly their interchangeability of form." Carlos Fausto, "A Blend of Blood and Tobacco: Shamans and Jaguars among the Parakaña of Eastern Amazonia," in *In Darkness and Secrecy*, 158–159.

[79]Carlos Fausto, *Warfare and Shamanism in Amazonia* (New York: Cambridge University, 2012).

[80]Robin M. Wright, *Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans of the Northwest Amazon* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2013).

[81]Fausto says of the Parakaña shamans today: "Metamorphosis into a jaguar is an interspecies cross-dressing (a transvestment) that implies the acquisiton of the animal's dispositions and capacities . . . Those who transvest are dangerous, since they can act as the predator for real. . . the main purpose of the allomorphy [is] to feed oneself by acquiring the feline's capacity to hunt" (*Warfare and Shamanism*, 208–209). Wright notes that the Baniwa have a category of "jaguar shaman" distinguished from other shamans by a decade of training and the ability to transform into a jaguar spirit, which he describes in *Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans,* 8–12, 13.

[82]Wright also notes shamanic metamorphosis into jaguars among the Guahibo of the Vichada River in Colombia; he also cites jaguar ceremonies involving jaguar bone trumpets and the demon-god Kuwai as spreading from the Arawakan peoples to the eastern Tukanoan-speaking societies of the northwest Amazon (*Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans*, 98, 22). Fausto finds similar jaguar traditions among the Asurini and Araweté, two other Tupí-Guaraní groups (*Warfare and Shamanism*, 224–225). Jaguar transformations have also been studied today among the Brazilian indigenous groups the Kulina and the Arara, though Quammen argues that

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violence, and eating raw meat, a concept that has been historically linked to the practice of cannibalism.[83]

This article does not aim to further elucidate local indigenous understandings of the boundaries between humans and animals, though such analyses could and should be productively applied to the data collected here. For instance, in the Amazon region, there was a widespread understanding of witchcraft and rival enemy attack.[84] This indigenous sensibility has at times even been tacitly shared by Christian missionaries, who occasionally appointed former shamans as catechists or who behaved as shamans themselves in an attempt to control or temper the natural world.[85] Likewise, some indigenous peoples clearly perceived Jesuits as powerful shamans in their own right, perhaps aligning themselves with these Catholic newcomers out of genuine conviction that these new medicine men would keep them safe.[86] The convergence of indigenous and Catholic beliefs around sorcery erases distinctions between Guaraní, Moxos, Jesuit, indigenous convert, and jaguar-shaman. Yet it is a different affinity that this article purports to explore, not of overlapping human understandings of ritual roles, but of collectively experienced human-animal encounters. Jesuit records preserve instances of raw confrontations between human and animal that precede human overlay, that are understudied and that do not fit neatly into either sweeping category of "Jesuit" or "indigenous" worldview.

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invocations of felid spirits and shape-shifting with wildcats also occur with other species on other continents, including among the Kerinci of west-central Sumatra (the tiger), and in the eastern Congo (the leopard): see *Monster of God,* 8. For the Kulina in Brazil, Pollock notes that jaguars embody an exaggerated form of male gender: Donald Pollock, "Siblings and Sorcerers: The Paradox of Kinship among the Kulina," in *In Darkness and Secrecy*, 203–204 on "dori". For the Arara of Brazil, see: Márnio Teixeira-Pinto, "Being Alone amid Others: Sorcery and Morality among the Arara, Carib, Brazil," in *In Darkness and Secrecy*, 215–243.

[83]The *karowara*, or spirits that shamans extract from jaguars in dreams, are described by Fausto as: "pathogenic objects controlled by shamans, with no autonomous volition but rather only a compulsion to eat human flesh." Fausto, "A Blend of Blood and Tobacco," 161. Also, Fausto, *Warfare and Shamanism,* 224.

[84]See, for instance, *In Darkness and Secrecy: The Anthropology of Assault Sorcery and Witchcraft in Amazonia,* ed. Neil L. Whitehead and Robin Wright (Durham, N.C.: Duke University, 2004).

[85]On the convergent roles and identities of Christian missionaries and shamans, see Susan Neylan, "Shamans, Missionaries and Prophets: Comparative Perspectives on Nineteenth-Century Religious Encounters in British Columbia." *Historical Papers* (1994). On one Jesuit who was himself disciplined for behaving too much like an indigenous shaman, see Charlotte De Castelnau-L'Estoile, "The Uses of Shamanism: Evangelizing Strategies and Missionary Models in Seventeenth-Century Brazil," in *The Jesuits II: Cultures, Sciences and the Arts, 1540–1773*, ed. John O'Malley, G. A. Bailey, Steven Harris, and T. Frank Kennedy (Buffalo, N.Y.: University of Toronto, 2006), 616–637.

[86]The Jesuit Montoya tells of a Guaraní shaman, Ñeçu, who began to hold baptisms in the style of Catholic priests as a way to consolidate his own power. Montoya, *The Spiritual Conquest*, 201–202.

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To illustrate the limitations of human-imposed categories, back in the mid-eighteenth century, the Jesuit Eder captured the significance of the jaguar to the indigenous peoples gathered in the Moxos missions in a way that contemporary scholars would recognize and classify as indigenous. The Moxos beliefs struck Eder as alien and inferior to his Catholic European worldview, but he reported them nonetheless:

> I have already explained how the Indians add quite ignorantly to their list of *arama* [chiefs] the most ferocious animals, in their goal of conjuring fear and in this manner changing that terror to veneration. Furthermore, since [the jaguar] is the most ferocious of the animals and surpasses them all in dignity, the Indians consider it not simply as *Arama* (Chief), but as *Aramamaco*, which is how one says supreme Emperor.[87]

A twenty-first-century scholar might privilege this sort of example for its usefulness for reconstructing early indigenous beliefs. But interestingly, asides like this are far outnumbered and overshadowed in Eder's report by vivid descriptions of attacks and sightings of actual jaguars. Jaguars themselves, not divinely or humanly propelled but present in their own right, intrude first.

II. Encounters with Jaguars

Four different Jesuit reports of jaguar encounters from the accounts of Eder and Montoya have been selected here to represent how these Jesuits might have first encountered jaguars, and how they forwarded these encounters to their readers. Eder began by painting a harrowing picture of danger from jaguars that extended into the very heart of the Christian mission settlements. "Truly, I cannot easily say how many jaguars there are in these reductions," he fretted.

> Everywhere you can find many. At night, not even the missions themselves are safe. In one of them, two Fathers were in the middle of dinner and not a single Indian had yet gone to bed, when a jaguar walked right into their dining room through one door, and left through another door to get to the meat hanging near the kitchen so that it, too, could have its meal. But once noticed, as much by the dogs as by the Indians, who ran and gathered from all sides, it suffered the punishment for its audacity.[88]

[87]"J'ai déjà raconté comment les Indiens ajoutèrent tout bêtement dans la liste des arama les animaux les plus féroces, dans le but d'en conjurer leur peur et de cette façon change leur crainte en veneration. De plus comme le tigre est le plus féroce des animaux et qu'il les dépasse tous en dignité, c'est pourquoi les Indiens le considèraient non pas comme *Arama* (Chef) mais comme *Aramamaco*, c'est comme si tu disais Empereur supreme." Eder, *Missionnaire en Amazonie*, 139.

[88]"Vraiment, je ne pourrai pas dire facilement combien de jaguars il y a dans les réductions. Partout tu en trouves plusieurs. *De nuit, les missions elles-mêmes ne sont pas sûres.* Dans l'une d'entre elles, deux Pères étaient en train de souper et aucun Indien ne s'était encore couché,

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Eder's appraisal of this encounter is remarkable in at least three respects. First, it is mission Catholics, not Montoya's "pagans" or "lapsed converts," who are at risk. Second, there is an unspoken, unified response to the sudden appearance of the jaguar: Kill it. Fathers, Indians and dogs all gather to "punish" or execute the brazen intruder. Third, the confrontation is described without reference to the divine, either in the form of the Christian God or the indigenous gods. There is an immediacy and unprocessed rawness to this human-jaguar meeting that puts Catholic missionaries and indigenous neophytes (and their dogs) on the same footing.

While other missionary writings showcase the very real differences between indigenous and European beliefs and cultural responses, this particular instant, as reported by Eder, effaces difference.[89] When surprised by a jaguar on the eighteenth-century frontier, Eder catalogs a carnal, visceral, *human* response of self-preservation at the expense of the jaguar. This is jarring to present-day sentiment, informed as we are by the jaguar's place on the world's endangered species list.[90] But it is also jars when set against the early modern Jesuits' own depictions of this frontier as a religious battlefield where jaguars alternately symbolized either indigenous *Aramamacos* (the spirits of great chiefs or shamans), or the interventionist hand of the Christian God. In moments of sudden encounter, jaguars did not symbolize. They terrified.

Self-preservation was of paramount concern to Jesuits writing in the Paraguay missions as well. The second jaguar episode highlighted here is from Montoya, who appears to have reported the gritty particulars of a Guaraní Indian's run-in with a jaguar for the purpose of instructing readers

quand un jaguar entra dans leur salle à manger par une porte, en ressortit par l'autre et se dirigea vers la viande suspendue près de la cuisine pour avoir lui aussi son repas. Mais aperçu, tant par les chiens que par les Indiens, accourus ensemble de tous côtés, il subit le châtiment de son audace." Eder, *Missionnaire en Amazonie*, 202–203.

[89]Inga Clendinnen notes the tension in trying to describe religion in zones of encounter where sometimes it seems that there is a "creative mixing of divergent traditions," but at others "[we are faced with] the inexactibility of a profoundly different way of conceptualizing the world and man's place within it." This tension is not a simple byproduct of twentieth-century historians' categories like "syncretism," but it is visible in some early records such as the Jesuit Eder's, in which he fixates on similarity seemingly without any cognitive dissonance. See: Inga Clendinnen, "Ways to the Sacred: Reconstructing 'Religion' in Sixteenth-Century Mexico," *History and Anthropology* 5 (1990): 109.

[90]Interestingly, twenty-first-century jaguar conservationist Alan Rabinowitz associates some of this violence against jaguars with religious practices over time: "The jaguar, with its power, ferocity, and valor, was of man's world, yet outside of man's world; it was a strong, secretive animal of the dark, dense forest, linked to the spirit world, godly but not God. *God (or gods) empowered man to chase, wound, and even kill this favored species when necessary,* despite its otherworldly status." Rabinowitz, *An Indomitable Beast*, 37.

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on how to save themselves. “The natives have learned that [the jaguar] avoids human urine like death,” he imparted helpfully.

> A tiger pursued an Indian in a forest near where I lodged. Though he shouted we could not hear him. He climbed a tree, and the tiger crouched at its foot waiting for him to come down. The Indian flung down heavy branches to drive it off, but it would not budge. He then resorted to the simple means just mentioned and the tiger instantly fled at the smell.[91]

The fact-gathering tone of Montoya’s report resembles some of his colleagues’ descriptions of bears, far to the north in Canada. There, the French Recollet missionary Chrestien LeClercq wrote of bears when he was posted to the Gaspé region on a mission from 1676 to 1688. The limited space he allotted to bears was devoted almost entirely to how Indians hunted bears, and how they might protect themselves from attack.[92]

At the Moxos missions, Jesuits also conveyed that they looked to Indians, including children, to learn tips about what might deflect predators. The third jaguar episode featured here resembles Montoya’s, only it stars two seven-year-old boys who were treed by a jaguar on their way home. One of the boys was carrying a container of powder made from pepper, and he instinctively flung the pepper directly into the eyes of the oncoming jaguar. “The boys were afraid and did not know how to save themselves, what else could they do?” Eder wrote sympathetically. He spared his readers no details about the agony that ensued for the jaguar:

> The huge animal soon felt the effect [of the pepper] and descended the tree with full speed. First it rubbed its eyes with its claws, damaging them; finally it ripped its own eyes out, and stayed there in place, disconcerted. The boys climbed down and ran home where they reported what had happened. Their father returned with them to the site accompanied by dogs. They beat the trees to find the jaguar and the father killed the animal without difficulty, since it was deprived of its eyes.[93]

[91]Montoya, *The Spiritual Conquest*, 34.

[92]“If he does not bring it down, the Bear embraces him, and will very soon have torn him to pieces with its claws,” LeClercq reported, prefacing his survival tips for European newcomers to that forest. He continued: “But the Indian to escape this throws himself face down upon the ground. The Bear smells him, and if the man does not stir, the Bear turns him over and places its nose upon his mouth to find if he is breathing. If it does not smell the breath, it places its bottom on the [man’s] belly, crushes him as much as it can . . . if it perceives that the man breathes it will press him like that until it believes it has suffocated him . . . To guard against this, it is necessary to take good care neither to breathe nor to move until it is far off.” Father Chrestien LeClercq, “The Hunting of Moose, of Bears, of Beavers, of Lynxes, and other animals according to their seasons,” in *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World,* ed. Susan Sleeper-Smith (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 2009), 21.

[93]“Je ne peux pas omettre de raconteur l’histoire admirable d’un jaguar et de deux enfants d’à peine sept ans. Leur père les avait envoyés dans un jardin potager pas très loin de leur

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Though pepper and urine figured in these cases, Jesuits stressed natural instinct as what saved these Indians' lives first and foremost--not necessarily specialized knowledge or divine protection. Indians staring down the jaguars were presented as being distant from the realm of the spiritually symbolic. In fact, they seem to have survived precisely because they did not pause for reverence or contemplative wonder at the jaguar's targeting of them.

Jesuits wrote about their own number in these same terms, underscoring the terror of jaguar encounters, and the impulsive and extreme violence required to survive. The fourth and last jaguar incident collected here features a coadjutant with the Jesuits, an architect from Bohemia, who had stepped ashore to relieve himself during his journey to the missions. "He came on land all alone carrying a rifle, which was not his habit," Eder emphasized.

> Before he had straightened up, he saw among the very dense reeds rise in front of him, completely unexpectedly, an enormous spotted jaguar that, after stretching out, fixed its gaze on him while swishing its tail, which was a bad sign. The Brother, who could have called out to the Indian rowers for help because they were barely ten steps away, *forgot everything else, and did not think about anything except his survival,* and pointed his rifle towards the jaguar who quickly took it between its teeth. When he saw this, the coadjutant Brother, not knowing what to do, fired: with so much success that the beast collapsed, as if struck down, even though the weapon was not loaded with anything but the small shot that we generally use for hunting birds.[94]

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habitation, pour y rapporter de piment fort qui avait été réduit en poudre là-bas. Sur le chemin de retour, ces enfants, ayant vu dans un buisson un jaguar, montèrent dans un arbre pour le fuir. Le fauve les poursuivit; mais au sommet de l'arbre ils lui échappèrent. Même en allongeant ses pattes, le jaguar ne pouvait pas arriver jusque là pour les atteindre et les déloger. Comme les petits garçons avaient peur et ne savaient pas comment se sauver, que pouvaient-ils faire? Alors, avec le petit recipient contenant le piment, celui qui le portrait, essaya instinctivement de repousser le fauve. Pendant qu'il le faisait, par Bonheur, le vase s'ouvrit, et le piment en poudre commença à tomber dans les yeux du jaguar. Le gros animal en ressentit aussitôt l'effet et descendit à toute vitesse de l'arbre. Alors, il se frotta d'abord les yeux avec ses griffes, puis les endommagea; enfin il se les arracha lui-même et déconcerté demeura sur place. Les enfants descendirent en catimini et revenus chez eux racontèrent ce qui s'était passé. Leur père repartit avec eux, accompagné de chiens. Ils battirent les arbres pour retrouver le jaguar et le père tua sans difficulté l'animal privé de ses yeux." Eder, *Missionnaire en Amazonie*, 210.

[94]"Le premier arriva à un Frère coadjuteur de Bohème, architecte remarquable, qui naviguait sur un fleuve pour accomplir sa tâche d'une mission à l'autre. Il demanda aux rameurs indiens de le deposer sur la rive. Il descendit tout seul emportant un fusil, ce qui n'était pas dans ses habitudes. Pour faire ses besoins il marcha quelques pas dans les roseaux sans se démunir de son arme; cependant, comme lui-même le confirma, sans avoir réfléchi à bien emporter ce fusil et à l'avoir toujours à portée de main. Or, avant de se redresser, il vit parmi les roseaux très denses et de façon tout à fait inattendue, se lever devant lui un énorme jaguar tacheté qui, après s'être étiré, le fixa en remuant la queue, ce qui est mauvais signe. Le Frère qui aurait pu appeler au secours les rameurs indiens qui étaient à peine à dix pas, *oubliant tout le reste, ne songea*

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Notably, neither Jesuit laymen nor Indians are said to have reported praying, or having time to pray, when they were staring down a jaguar. For Jesuits and the Christian subjects they privileged, this is an aberration. Consider the contrast between the descriptions of jaguar encounters above, and how one of their Jesuit contemporaries, Jérôme Lalemant, described proper Christian reactions to an earthquake in Canada on February 5, 1663. Earthquakes, like jaguar attacks, were cataclysmic natural events. Yet rather than focusing on the trauma reaction to earthquakes, the Jesuit Lalemant presented a counterpoint image of individuals whose thoughts turned to God even *before* their lives were in peril. Lalemant wrote of "God's special protection over our settlements." He told of a nun in Québec, Catherine of St. Augustin, who had a premonition about the earthquake:

> We have all the more reason to thank Heaven for this most loving protection, inasmuch as a person of probity and of irreproachable life felt presentiments of what afterward occurred and declared them to [her confessor]. On the very evening that this earthquake began, she had a vision of four frightful specters occupying the four quarters of the lands surrounding Quebec and shaking them violently, as if bent on overturning everything. They would undoubtedly have succeeded, had not a higher Power of venerable majesty, the ultimate source of all the disturbance and movement, opposed their efforts and prevented them from harming those whom God wished, for the sake of their own salvation, to frighten but not to destroy.[95]

It was not even just the French, but also "the Indians [who] had had presentiments of this fearful earthquake," Lalemant continued. He then presented a long deposition from a twenty-six year old Algonquin woman in which she described a voice coming to her the night before the earthquake to warn her, in advance, that the earth would tremble.[96]

The difference in emphasis between the Jesuit Lalemant's earthquake anecdotes and his colleague Eder's jaguar reports was a crucial one for early modern Christians. Whether or not one had time to think of God when one was on the brink of death, before and after that peril, connecting and crediting survival to God was key. In the mindset of eighteenth-century Jesuits, one was not saved from catastrophe because one *"forgot everything*

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qu'à sa survie et pointa son fusil vers le jaguar qui le prit aussitôt entre ses dents. Quand il vit cela, le Frère coadjuteur, ne sachant que faire, tira: avec tant de success que le fauve s'affaissa, comme foudroyé, bien que l'arme ne fût chargée qu'avec du petit plomb que nous utilisons généralement pour chasser les oiseaux." Eder, *Missionnaire en Amazonie,* 212.

[95]Jérôme Lalemant, "Universal Earthquake in Canada and Its Marvelous Effects [1662–1663]," in *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries in Seventeenth-Century North America,* ed. Allan Greer (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2000), 129.

[96]Lalemant, "Universal Earthquake," 130.

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else, and did not think about anything except . . . survival." One was spared because one had seen, heard, or thought of God.[97]

This makes the way that some Jesuits in the Moxos and Paraguay wrote about jaguars all the more striking. Instead of presenting jaguar attacks as primarily occasions for God to intervene, some Jesuits in jaguar-threatened missions opted to preserve lived moments of trauma. For the most part, jaguars are frozen pre-parable in Jesuit records, before prayers and moralizing, in that paralyzing first moment of terror in which the animals were not allegorical, but overwhelmingly real.[98] The four episodes above, of jaguars wandering into mission towns, treeing indigenous peoples, and suffering reprisal at the hands of Indians and Jesuits alike, contrast in intensity with the handful of instances in Jesuit records in which these missionaries tried to retroactively process the presence of jaguars in Christian terms.

III. Processing Jaguars

Trauma came first and symbolism only second for Jesuits in this mission field. This section addresses how Jesuits interpolated God into jaguar attacks only after the fact; how they situated themselves relative to jaguars in local

[97]Contemporaries of the Jesuits, Puritan clergy in North America, made this particularly explicit in sermons that they wrote in response to earthquakes in the 1720s. After a particularly strong 1727 earthquake in New England, Puritan leaders delivered sermons that instructed the survivors who poured into church that "God's primary purpose in an earthquake is to terrify man into an awakened state of repentance and reformation." Peter Rumsey describes these sermons as indicating a change, in the eighteenth century, from emphasizing theory and Providence, to using catastrophic events as "an effective rhetorical means of persuading their congregations to prepare themselves for life in the next world," and he sees it as foreshadowing the broader Atlantic "Great Awakening" with mini-awakenings or renewals of devotion. Peter Lockwood Rumsey, *Acts of God and the People, 1620–1730* (Ann Arbor, Mich.: UMI Research, 1986), 6, 121.

[98]For another animal, the eagle, the Jesuit Jérôme Lalemant also stressed the contrast between parables or stories, and the terrifying reality of frontier encounter. He described an eagle attack on a boy in the Canada missions around 1647: "What the poets have invented about the abduction of [the Trojan youth] Ganymede [by the god Zeus] has a basis in the boldness of eagles. Not long ago, one of those great birds swooped down on a little nine-year-old boy. It placed one of its feet on his shoulder and seized him by the opposite ear with the talons of the other. When the poor child began to cry out, his little three-year-old brother took a stick and tried to strike the eagle, but it would not let go. Still, this did perhaps prevent it from tearing the child's eyes and face with its beak and gave the father time to come to his assistance. When the bird heard the noise of human voices, it appeared somewhat surprised but did not release its prey. The father came running and had to break its thigh. Fortunately, he had a sickle in his hand, so that when the eagle felt itself wounded and tried to fly away, he was able to cut off its head. The Indians say that eagles quite often attack men and that they sometimes carry off beavers and sturgeons heavier than sheep. This seems to me unlikely. Some say that these are griffins and claim that the latter have been seen in these countries. I merely relate what I have heard." See: Jérôme Lalemant, "Various Matters [1647–1648]," in *The Jesuit Relations: Natives and Missionaries,* 122–123.

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hierarchies of power; and how they described their competition, indigenous jaguar-shamans. The common ground underlying all these interpretive moves by Jesuits in the early modern Amazon is that they kept their eyes on the real jaguars described in the previous section. Jesuits linked God to actual jaguar incidents, and defined religious authority in the missions as relative to, and contingent upon, the appearance of these predators.

Eder, of the Moxos missions, always appended his reflections on jaguars after long descriptions of panicked face-to-face meetings with jaguars. For instance, he told of an older Italian Jesuit who was with a group of Moxos Indians when they stumbled across two jaguars. Everyone scrambled to climb trees to save themselves, but the Jesuit had particular difficulty, since he was elderly and did not want to let go of his rifle. In his desperation to swing up and out of the way, he grabbed what he thought was a vine, but what turned out to be a lethal snake. "Once the jaguars had left, he examined the branch from which he was hanging," Eder narrated.

> He saw then that he had seized with both hands a serpent . . . *But thanks to divine Providence,* he had smashed the head of this snake against the branch of the tree with his rifle, which saved him from a mortal bite. He let himself fall to the ground and jumped away [from the dead snake]. *Then his fear changed into admiration and praise at the immense goodness of God.*[99]

Eder added his own *ex post facto* layer of commentary to his report of the Italian Jesuit who belatedly credited his survival to God: "Once I read in the life of [Jesuit] Father Anchieta whom the Portuguese designate as the Saint-Francis-Xavier of Brazil, that this remarkable man had asked . . . [Christ the] Redeemer with whom he was intimate, and procured that no wrong should ever befall missionaries from any dangerous animals; daily examples

[99]"Le second exemple est ce qui arriva à un Père italien, cousin germain maternel du défunt pape Clément XIII, qui poursuivait des Indiens fugitifs. Le missionnaire, également muni d'un fusil, justement pour sa protection et celle de ses compagnons de voyage, suivait un sentier avec quelques Indiens quant, à toute vitesse, surgirent sur le même chemin deux jaguars, probablement en train de se bagarrer et de se poursuivre l'un l'autre. Aussitôt les Indiens se dispèrserent, mais comme le Père, déjà âgé, ne pouvait pas monter à un arbre, il rechercha une branche à laquelle il pourrait se suspendre à l'aide de ses bras. Il en vit une mais, pour avoir les mains plus libres, il aurait dû se défaire de son fusil, or il le prit d'une main et, en sautant, il attrapa la branche, puis en relevant le plus possible ses jambs, il laissa la voie libre aux jaguars. Cependant le missionaire sentit je ne sais quoi de mou sous ses mains. Comme les jaguars s'étaient déjà éloignés, il examina la branche à laquelle il était suspend. Il vit alors qu'il avait saisi des deux mains un serpent qui était allongé sur la branche et que les Espagnols appellant *serpiente de cascabel* [Crotalus durissus], c'est-à-dire serpent à sonnettes avec lesquelles il émet un son. *Cependant, grâce à la Providence divine*, il avait écrasé sans le savoir la tête du crotale contre la branche de l'arbre avec la détente de son arme, ce qui le sauva d'une morsure mortelle. Il se laissa tomber à terre en sautant de là-haut. *Alors sa frayeur se changea en admiration et en louanges à l'immense Bonté divine.*" Eder, *Missionnaire en Amazonie*, 212–213.

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demonstrate and confirm this truth."[100] Here, Eder credited a venerable colleague, Anchieta, with praying successfully for protection of all Jesuits.

Eder's attitudes are consistent with those of some of his Jesuit brethren posted farther north and west, in Baja California. There, in late 1683, the Jesuit Eusebio Kino and his expedition found the body of a squirrel that had been smashed into the shape of a cross by a falling tree. Kino interpreted it as a sign from God, and named the site where they found it "La Santissima Cruz," the Most Holy Cross, and it became a site for prayer.[101] Both Kino and Eder saw animals as cryptic signs left by God in the natural environment in order for humans to interpret. Squirrels, snakes and jaguars could denote God's positive interventions into the world, if one knew how to read them. However, there are two small differences between Eder's processing of jaguar confrontations in the Moxos in the mid-1700s, and Kino's perceiving the sign of the cross in a squirrel in Baja California in the late 1600s. First, unlike Kino's dead squirrel (and Eder's own dead serpent), the jaguars in Eder's report were alive and active. Second, Eder jumped from the survival of one of his Jesuit associates to the assertion that all Jesuits, as a group, were exempt from execution by jaguar because they were favored by God, protected by the prayers of their very own saintly members.

Jesuits elevated both jaguars and themselves in the way that they incorporated these animals into human hierarchies. They tacitly acknowledged the unpredictable initiative of jaguars, but also singled out Jesuits as a protected elite. From Paraguay, the Jesuit Montoya generalized: "[The jaguar] seeks out the poorest meat; if there is a Spaniard, a black, and an Indian, it attacks the black first; if there are only blacks, it chooses the oldest and worst smelling."[102] By Montoya's estimation, jaguars stood slightly outside the traditional European rankings that placed Spaniards at the top, Indians in the middle, and Africans last. When jaguars intruded, they did so in a way that reinforced European and Christian privilege. His Jesuit colleague Eder concurred in a subchapter that he entitled, "The missionaries are safe up until today."[103]

[100]"Jadis j'ai lu dans la vie du Père Anchieta, que les Portugais désignent comme le saint-François-Xavier du Brésil, que cet homme remarquable avait demandé, parmi plusieurs autre choses, au Rédempteur dont il était intime, et obtenu qu'aucun mal ne soit fait à aucun missionnaire par tous ces animaux dangereux; des exemples quotidiens démontrent et confirme la réalité de cela." Eder, *Missionnaire en Amazonie*, 212–213.

[101]"El paraxe y passo de la Ssa. Cruz tomo esta denominacion de lo que ayer milagrosamente sucedio al tiempo que derribaron un cordon seco pues al tiempo que cayo al suelo se aplasto una ardilla y formo con dicho tronco una cruz como si a proposito y con las manos se huvien echo y se puso y venero y quedo de aquella manera." 1683 *Relación of the second Jesuit expedition to California*, ARSI Mexicana 17, f. 521.

[102]Montoya, *The Spiritual Conquest*, 34.

[103]Eder marveled about "the mark of favor, the divine protection that . . . has benefitted the Jesuit missionaries in all of America . . . So many Indians, with whom we live and spend our days and take

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On the one hand, these interpretations give the impression that Jesuits were unchanged by their encounters with jaguars. Real jaguars were compressed into symbols of elite Christian favor, reinforced by the fortuitous lack of Jesuit victims. Yet to focus on this intransigence obscures the exceptional appearance of jaguars in Jesuit hierarchies at all. With little precedent in their European experiences, some Jesuits in Paraguay and the Moxos were moved to turn jaguars into Christian symbols. They incorporated jaguars into their worldview as enforcers of Christian agenda and hierarchy. Scholars generally assign this sort of appropriation of local wildlife into the spiritual realm as being unique to indigenous peoples, not to Europeans.[104] But as scholar Davíd Carrasco notes, "*All* participants in the contact zones—including the privileged, the Europeans . . . transculturate . . . [I]t is not just the indigenous peoples, the mestizos or the mulattos who are picking and choosing from competing cultural traditions."[105] Jesuits, too, were thinking with jaguars.

It was not only the Jesuits who wrestled with how to fit these predators into their schema for understanding the world, but also Christian Indians. Eder reported with some frustration how Moxos Indians residing in the Jesuit missions understood jaguars in the mid-eighteenth century. These converts also fit jaguars into a symbolic hierarchy. According to Eder, at first they did not set jaguars outside of human rankings, but put them firmly inside and ahead of humans. "Every year this beast, intent on flesh and blood, unfortunately cuts into pieces a large number of Indians," Eder wrote.

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long voyages, die each year, but no missionaries . . . who have not until present suffered any of the damages caused by wild beasts, in the missions where I have lived or elsewhere . . . *Les missionnaires saufs jusqu'a ce jour* / Je ne peux pas passer sous silence la faveur insigne de la protection divine, dont, comme on peut le constater, ont bénéficié les missionaires jésuits dans toute l'Amérique. Il est connu de par le monde combien ils ont oeuvré ici: en consequence, combien et dans quelles conditions ils ont dû entreprendre de voyages, pénétrer des forêts, parcourir de savanes, traverser de fleuves et de lacs, et tout ceci au milieu de tigres, de scorpions, de serpents mortels, de crocodiles, d'araignées et de bien d'autres animaux ou insects, dont la morsure vous ôte la vie en quelques instants. Et alors que tant d'Indiens, avec qui nous vivons, passons nos journées, entreprenons de longs voyages, meurent chaque année, par contre aucun des missionnaires, dont les demeures et les autres facilities sont identiques ou même moindres que celles dont jouissent les Indiens, n'a jusqu'à present souffert de dommages causes par les bêtes sauvages, que ce soit dans les missions où j'ai vécu ou ailleurs. Bien plus, il n'était pas rare qu'il arrivât des événements si extraordinaires que même les Indiens, pourtant si stupides, s'en émerveillent et du coup leur estime pour les Pères augmenta." Eder, *Missionnaire en Amazonie,* 211–212.

[104]For instance, anthropologist Carlos Fausto, who delves into the multiplicity and complexity of indigenous perspectives on jaguars, reduces all European missionaries into a single monolithic bloc that uniformly believed that jaguars indicated the devil. Fausto, "A Blend of Blood and Tobacco," 158.

[105]Carrasco, "Borderlands," 361.

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> When this happens, [the Indians] assemble all of the goods of the deceased and put them outside the door of the house so that the [jaguar], if it wants, can freely take them away. In effect, the Indians say that [the deceased's goods] belong to [the jaguar] by right of inheritance, to the point that if someone dares to take even a single item, he will be ripped to pieces by the beast, because he is guilty of the crime of lèse-majesté. Even if the wife and children of the deceased are dying of hunger, they are expected to support this belief rather than take a single kernel of corn left by the deceased. Such is the right of the jaguars![106]

Eder reported this as a prelude to one of his own interventions to help the widow of a man killed by a jaguar in the missions. He secretly took the food that the widow had left to the jaguar and redistributed it. It is not the purpose of this essay to evaluate Eder's action or to gauge whether he was successful in convincing the community to adopt Catholic and European views. The focus here is on the jaguar, and its poorly acknowledged impact on South American frontiers where it was widely perceived to make interventions of its own, ripping people to pieces. The historical record shows that real confrontations with jaguars such as this one, reported by Eder, were pushing both Jesuits and Moxos Indians to consider (and reconsider) this animal as a spiritual symbol. Here again, a real jaguar resisted human categorizing. Could old hierarchies and new practices stand up to unexpected jaguar takings, or did humans need to change?

Eder's account of community repercussions from a jaguar attack stands out for its lack of fit into easy Christian parable. He reported it nearly half a century after his zealous colleague, Diego de Eguiluz, reported in his 1696 annual letter that a Moxos Indian had been killed by a jaguar while hunting in the mountains. Eguiluz had noted that the man had skipped mass, "and so the [jaguar] ate him."[107] He publicized the moment because that jaguar had conveniently

[106]"Tous les ans ce fauve, très avide de chair et de sang, met malheureusement en pièces un grand nombre d'Indiens. Lorsque cela arrive, on rassemble toutes les affaires du défunt et chaque nuit on les met devant la porte de sa maison pour que le tigre, s'il le désire, puisse les emporter librement. En effet, les Indiens dissent qu'elles lui appartiennent toutes par droit d'héritage, au point que si quelqu'un osait en dérober ne serait qu'une toute petite partie, il serait mis en pièces par le fauve, car coupable d'un très grand crime de lèse-majesté. Même si l'épouse et les enfants du défunt mouraient de faim, ils devaient supporter cette croyance plûtot que prendre un seul grain de maïs laissé par le disparu. Ainsi l'ordonnait en effet le droit des tigres!" Eder, *Missionnaire en Amazonie,* 139–140.

[107]"Asi que se lo comió el tigre . . ." Diego de Eguiluz, S.J., 1696, *Relación de la Mission apostólica de los Moxos en esta Provincia del Peru de la Compañía de Jesus*. ARSI Peru 21, ff. 60–60v. Eguiluz's report about the Moxos strongly resembles a report from Paraguay in 1639 by Antonio Ruiz de Montoya, who wrote: "An irreligious youth always avoided going to Mass, even on days when the Church requires it. He was a stumbling block to the others, taking them into the forest. One feast day, overcome by a strong temptation, he took another fellow out with him and would not let him go back for Mass. The following day, also a feast day, he again wanted to keep him away. However, his companion, regretting the day he had missed, decided

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served Christian purposes, picking off an individual who did not conform to the Catholic practices taught by the Jesuits. But Eder was faced with a jaguar that did not target a delinquent. He told of the death of an ordinary Moxos Christian convert. Eder had to tend to the Moxos Christian family that was left behind. Notably, in his after-the-fact interpretation of events, Eder reduced the jaguar from a cosmic marker of Christian triumph, to a major local player who had accrued controversial rights in human affairs. He shifted the jaguar from the outside of his previously stated hierarchy, where it had appeared elevated as an extension of God's will and the saintly Jesuit Anchieta's prayers. In this case, Eder wrote of a jaguar as uncomfortably on the inside, and he sized it up as less worthy to legal property claims than a Moxos Indian widow.

Also on the inside of Eder's daily life at the missions were indigenous jaguar-shamans, or shape-shifters. Surprisingly, jaguar-shamans appear far less often in Jesuit accounts of Paraguay and the Moxos than the jaguars themselves. Montoya and Eder both give plentiful space to the indigenous shamans of Paraguay and the Moxos, setting them up as key competitors with the Jesuits. But in Montoya's extensive seventeenth-century account of the Paraguay missions, *The Spiritual Conquest*, and also in Eder's multi-volume report on the Moxos missions, jaguar-shaman rituals are only described at length once by each. Before looking closely at these mentions, it is worth noting how unusual it is for these Jesuits to not make more of the association between jaguars and shamans. As noted previously, jaguars were omnipresent in the religious repertoire of many indigenous peoples of the Americas. As early as 1557, the German captive Hans Staden reported that a Tupinambá chief in Brazil was invoking the jaguar with reference to ritual cannibalism. Staden wrote that the Tupinambá leader, Cunhambebe, was eating a human leg and offered him some. When Staden refused by commenting that animals should not eat their own species, Cunhambebe exclaimed in Tupi, "Jau war sehe [Jauára ichê]"—"I am a jaguar; it tastes good."[108] This is precisely the sort of conflation of jaguars with pre-Christian beliefs (cannibalism, animal transformation) that missionaries were

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to make this one and so left him. He had gone but a few steps when he heard his tempter screaming for help. Turning to look, he saw him in the clutches of a fierce tiger which was furiously rending him to pieces. He fled from the peril and told what had happened. The people came and discovered that a good part of him had already been eaten by the tiger—a manifest punishment, and example to the rest." Montoya, *The Spiritual Conquest*, 148.

[108]M. Kittiya Lee notes that Staden spent nine years as prisoner of war in the Tupinambá clans around Bertioga and San Vicente, and "the extensive linguistic content of Staden's work reflects the fluency that he attained." Lee, "Language and Conquest, 150–151. See too: Eve M. Duffy and Alida C. Metcalf, *The Return of Hans Staden: A Go-between in the Atlantic World* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 67. See also Fausto, "A Blend of Blood and Tobacco," 159.

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trained to target. Indeed, missionaries among the Tupí-Guaraní peoples worked hard to write jaguars out of local spirituality and replace them with more appropriate Christian symbols, including Christ on the cross.[109]

But both Montoya and Eder left descriptions of jaguar-shamans that complicate the image of missionaries as stamping out their opposition. The singularity of their tone is most apparent when contrasted with the writing of one of their own, the Jesuit Martín Dobrizhoffer, who served eighteen years as missionary among the Guaraní and the Abipones, a group of Guaicuruan-language speakers in the Gran Chaco plains. Dobrizhoffer published *The Account of the Abipones: An Equestrian People of Paraguay* in 1784 in Austria, where he resided after the expulsion of the Jesuits. The Abipones also had shamans who transformed into jaguars, and Dobrizhoffer had much to say on these "magicians, or more properly impostors, who arrogate to themselves full power of warding and inflicting disease and death, of predicting future events, of raising floods and tempests, of transforming themselves into tigers."[110] Dobrizhoffer wrote of a conversation he had with the Abipones about the shaman-jaguar transformation:

> "You daily kill tigers in the plain," I said, "without dread, why then should you weakly fear a false imaginary tiger [jaguar] in the town?"
> "You Fathers don't understand these matters," they reply, with a smile. "We never fear, but kill [jaguars] in the plain, because we see them. Artificial [jaguars] we do fear, because they can neither be seen nor killed by us."[111]

Given the jaguar encounters related above, Dobrizhoffer's assertion that the Abipones did not fear actual jaguars but only imagined ones seems unlikely. His dialogue seems stilted by his agenda to discredit the jaguar spirits channeled by Abipone shamans.

Montoya, writing a century earlier in Paraguay, did not separate real jaguars from divine spirits, nor did he overlook the fear caused by these flesh-and-blood predators. His single explicit mention of jaguar-shaman connection came after the jaguar attacks on Santo Tomé whose descriptions opened this article. "A number of magicians, who had cast away their magic out of fear, secretly became more pernicious than ever," Montoya wrote. "But those instruments of divine justice, the [jaguars], returned to wreak even worse ravages . . . The people recognized their fault and implored mercy; mutinying against the magicians, they forced them to renounce their diabolical frauds."[112]

[109]Fausto. "Se Deus Fosse Jaguar," 385–418.

[110]Dobrizhoffer as quoted by Fausto, "A Blend of Blood and Tobacco," 158.

[111]Fausto also notes the contrast between Dobrizhoffer and other Jesuits such as Montoya, commenting that "the Jesuits oscillated between considering the shamans' powers a mere imposture or an effective demoniacal force." Fausto, "A Blend of Blood and Tobacco," 173n2.

[112]Montoya, *The Spiritual Conquest*, 158–159.

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Much has been written about Montoya's and other Jesuits' competition with local Guaraní shamans over which religious leader had the most power over the environment.[113] But here, unlike with some of the Jesuits' other recorded showdowns with Guaraní shamans, Montoya never directly describes a public contest in which Jesuits faced off against shamans over who could best ward off jaguars.[114] Instead he alludes indirectly and in the plural to "magicians" who, like the Jesuits and Guaraní Indians, were faced with live jaguars on the rampage. These men intensified their rituals to stave off the real jaguars, but the jaguars continued to attack. Likewise, Jesuits and Christians intensified their "prayers and petitions" as noted in Montoya's opening quote to this article. Montoya presented shamanic rituals and Christian prayers as parallel attempts to dissipate the threat. In the end, for Montoya, what moved the jaguars was not the human skills of Jesuit or Guaraní, but "divine justice," the higher power of God himself.

It is worth repeating here that Montoya had a wealth of Christian parable at his disposal to frame this particular moment of Christians under siege by a wild beast, parable in which the Jesuit intercessionist role could have been glorified further at the expense of the shamans. One story he and his Jesuit colleagues would have known well was the popular legend of the medieval saint, Francis of Assisi (1182–1226). St. Francis famously encountered "the fierce wolf of Gubbio," who was attacking people. He approached the wolf, calling him "Friar Wolf," and empathizing with his hunger. He struck a deal with the animal, saying that he and the people of the city would feed it for the rest of its days if it stopped eating them. The deal apparently worked thanks to St. Francis's close connection to God.[115] But such intervention by a holy

[113]Rain, bones and journeys seem to be the three most prominently contested registers of spiritual authority for Jesuits and Guaraní shamans; jaguars are not often mentioned in these studies. Dot Tuer, "Old Bones and Beautiful Words: The Spiritual Contestation between Shaman and Jesuit in the Guaraní Missions," in *Colonial Saints: Discovering the Holy in the Americas, 1500–1800*, ed. Allan Greer and Jodi Bilinkoff (New York: Routledge, 2003), 77–97.

[114]Jesuits were often quite forthright about their participation in showdowns with shamans. The Jesuit Francisco Pinto, for instance, related how he publicly prayed and called for rain with some success, leading the Tupian-speaking Indians of the Rio Grande do Norte in Brazil to view him as "Master of Rain." His assuming of blurred roles that led him to seem like a "missionary who became a shaman-prophet" eventually led to his being pulled from the mission field except for in emergency peace-keeping situations such as the one that led to his death. Castelnau-L'Estoile, "The Uses of Shamanism," 621, 626.

[115]Kalof, *Looking at Animals*, 68. The absence of Jesuit comparisons between jaguars and wolves is as strange as the Jesuits' omitting comparisons between jaguars and lions. Wolves were recognized local predators in much of northern Europe, where Europeans (including Christians) had a long popular tradition of "were-wolves"—humans transformed into wolves, or channeling wolf spirits—that has been compared to South American indigenous practices of jaguar-shape-shifting. Rabinowitz, *An Indomitable Beast*, 37; Fausto, "A Blend of Blood and Tobacco," 171; Wright, *Mysteries of the Jaguar Shamans,* 243. On European werewolves, see: Darren Oldridge, *Strange Histories: The trial of the pig, the walking dead, and other matters of fact from the medieval and Renaissance worlds* (London: Routledge, 2007), 96–105.

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man appears to have been far from the mind of Montoya. It is not shamans or Jesuits who are magnified in his telling, but "Heaven" and "tigers [jaguars]."

Eder was shown above to have a moment of negotiating, Francis-style, with one jaguar over the property of the man he had killed. But like Montoya, he also made no mention of the patron saint of the animals as a model for how to intercede. In his longest description of Moxos jaguar-shamans,[116] Eder also resisted divorcing the jaguar from the realm of the real. His mention of shamanic metamorphosis came nearly a century into the Jesuits' proselytizing in the Moxos region. As his colleague Dobrizhoffer affirmed, even at that late stage, these rituals were still seen as potent by Christianized Indians. Eder described shaman-jaguar shape-shifting with condescension:

> The masters of superstitions, these slaves recognized for their laziness, that they call *motire* [shamans] . . . knew how to procure abundant harvests *thanks to the famous* [*jaguar*]. To satiate their hunger, one of their easiest and most profitable methods consists of inventing a [jaguar] that has been driven nearly crazy from anger and violence, and that has confided that it will destroy everything and create carnage, unless very quickly people bring a remedy for its righteous rage in the form of traditional food and chicha [beer] . . . To win even more respect . . . and authority, often the *motire* would claw himself lightly with his nails and pull out his hair, acts that he attributed to the angered [jaguar], and he would claim that if he had not sacrificed himself spontaneously in place of all the others, the beast would have killed everyone.[117]

[116]Eder does briefly allude to shamans transforming into jaguars (and other creatures) at one earlier point in his account, when he writes of shamans: "J'ai decouvert des indices sérieux qui prouvent qu'intervint un certain commerce avec le démon. Ainsi, ceux, dont la tâche était de conserver en mémoire toutes les sortes de superstitions, en ajoutaient de nouvelles, les répandaient ou encourageaient: on les appelle *motire* [chaman, devin, sorcier, guérisseur] qui sont assez nombreux parmi tous les peuples des réductions, meme s'ils n'ont peut-être pas partout été repérés, à cause de leur application et de leurs tentatives pour taire et cacher leurs secrets au missionaire . . . c'est vrai que la plupart des hommes et des femmes qui aimaient ce genre de vie étaient âgés. De plus, pour que quelqu'un soit considéré comme motire, il suffisait qu'il declare avoir parlé chez lui ou hors de chez lui avec un tigre, avec un crocodrile ou beaucoup mieux avec un *achane* [esprit, génie]." Eder, *Missionnaire en Amazonie*, 134.

[117]"Les maîtres en superstitions, ces esclaves reconnus de la paresse, que l'on appelle *motire*, comme je l'ai déjà dit, surent se procurer d'abondantes récoltes *grâce a ce fameux tigre*. Pour calmer leur faim, un de leurs moyens, parmi d'autres, des plus faciles et des plus rentables, consiste à inventer qu'un tigre, rendu presque fou par la colère et la violence, lui a confié qu'ill allait faire un carnage et tout détruire, à moins qu'au plus vite l'on ne porte remède à sa juste colère par les plat habituels et de la chichi . . . Ensuite, entièrement dans le noir, avec des flutes de pan prêtes pour cela, le motire appelle le tigre pour un repas d'alliance et de réconciliation. Enfin, il annonce qu le fauve vient d'arriver, laissant les autres livides de peur et s'attendant à la mort. Mais, cependant, quand ils entendent le motire sortir de la maison et declarer que le tigre s'est déjà entièrement calmé . . . alors ils commencent aussitôt à reprendre vie et satisfaits parlent à voix basse, persuadés que dorévanant ils n'ont plus rien à craindre du fauve . . . pour gagner

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Like Montoya, Eder emphasized how the shamans tried to use the jaguar in order to win respect, followers, or even a basic living. They had some success in that Eder himself acknowledged the persistence of these practices, and wrote of them in the plural. His observations parallel rituals still practiced today in Brazil by indigenous peoples such as the Arara, whose shaman-transformations emphasize the aggressiveness and anger of the jaguar spirit.[118]

But again, what is most striking in Eder's report is the contrast between his tone when describing this shamanic ritual, versus his tone when describing the genuine jaguar encounters highlighted in the previous section. Jaguars were a real source of fear for Eder. The *motire* who ritually embodied the essence of these jaguars were not; in fact, he mocked them (as Dobrizhoffer had) by suggesting that their embodiments involved "inventing." With his sardonic "thanks," Eder displaced all credit for the persistence of older indigenous rituals from the shamans, and instead credited *jaguars themselves* with "abundant harvests."[119] For Eder, as for Montoya, the presence of live jaguars clearly contributed to their being a volatile fixture that could be mustered by either the shamans or the Jesuits to attract followers. Thanks to real jaguars, multiple Jesuits described an environment in which Catholic missionaries, indigenous shamans, and converts alike were having to make a new symbolic space for the animal that fell somewhere in between Jesuit and pre-Christian indigenous interpretations.

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encore plus de respect de la part des siens et d'autorité sur eux, souvent le motire lui-même se griffe légèrement partout avec ses ongles et s'arrache des cheveux, actes qu'ill atribue à un tigre en colère et il pretend que s'il ne s'était pas sacrifié spontanément à la place des autres, le fauve aurait tué tout le monde. Ainsi, il parvient à être dorévanant considéré par tous comme une victim du people et une personne vénérée et consacrée du tigre, à qui personne n'osera facilement s'opposer, meme en parole, quand il demandera les festins coutumiers." Eder, *Missionnaire en Amazonie*, 140–141.

[118]"Aggressiveness, violence, and predation, which are what a jaguar epitomizes as the natural precondition of the world, must not be allowed to exist among living relatives: everything in Arara social life is explicitly thought and done to avoid and remove the hazards of untempered behaviors that can prolong misfortunes among the living . . . [A bad jaguar spirit's] very presence among the living proclaims that hostility, anger, and belligerence are intrinsic qualities of this world, and it demands immediate shamanic action . . . Being solitary and, above all, a predator, a jaguar is the paramount embodiment of what should ***not*** constitute the rules, values, and ways of behaving among living people." Teixeira-Pinto, "Being Alone amid Others," 236–237. Interestingly, Eder's description also sounds like a ritual reported by Montoya that featured a "devil" that sounds suspiciously like a jaguar spirit. Montoya told of a shaman, Taubici, who "when he wanted to talk to the devil" ordered everyone out of house and took part of the roof off for evil spirits to be allowed entrance. Then Taubici had fits with women holding him up as he made wild faces and gestures as he prophesied about future events. Tuer, "Old Bones and Beautiful Words," 87n38.

[119]Like the Jesuit Eder invoking "harvests" spurred by jaguars, puritans used the word "harvest" to describe those who were moved to renew their protestant faith after catastrophic earthquakes. Rumsey, *Acts of God and the People*, 140–141.

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IV. Conclusion

"Maybe some of you will be surprised that I have taken on describing an animal known and perhaps already seen by many people," the Jesuit Eder stated to introduce his chapter on jaguars. "But, because I know that there are so many fables far from the truth that are told about the tiger, by contrast I will talk about verifiable facts seen with my own eyes."[120] Eder's insistence on "verifiable facts" was not unique to his mid-eighteenth-century vantage point. As demonstrated here, some of his Jesuit predecessors in the Moxos and in Paraguay in the seventeenth century had similarly emphasized real and observed actions of jaguars that they encountered. Without the often unnerving intrusions of these animals, Christianity and shamanism would have played out very differently on these frontiers.

Consider the counterpoint of the Tupí-Guaraní of Brazil. Scholar Carlos Fausto has analyzed the changes to their religion resulting from the mix of Christianity and earlier indigenous views. Today among the Christianized Tupí-Guaraní, Fausto finds what he calls a "desjaguarificaçao"—a "dejaguarization," or sapping of blood out of their religious beliefs.[121] Many of their religious rituals have removed the focus on blood sacrifice that existed pre-encounter in *both* Tupí-Guaraní practice (in which it was represented by jaguars), *and* in Catholic belief (in which it was represented exclusively by the crucified Christ). In order to find a middle ground of agreement between two contrasting denoters of blood sacrifice, the symbol of the jaguar fell by the wayside in Christian-Tupí-Guaraní practice in the late 1800s.

But around 1700, the middle ground in the Paraguay and Moxos Jesuit missions looked quite different because of the adamantly non-symbolic third party affecting the outcome: real man-eating jaguars. Their presence precipitated what looks more like a "jaguarization" than a "dejaguarization" of Catholic-Guaraní and Catholic-Moxos devotion.[122] If one can presume a

[120] "Peut-être, quelques-uns seront surprise que je me charge de decrire un animal si connu et même déjà vu par beaucoup de gens. Mais, parce que je sais qu'au sujet du tigre on raconte beaucoup de fables éloignées de la vérité et qu'en revanche *on ne parle pas d'autres faits, tous véridiques et vus de mes propres yeux*, qui, je pense, intéresseront beaucoup le lecteur, je veux donc en parler à part et amplement." Eder, *Missionnaire en Amazonie*, 201. Eder's observation that "many fables far from the truth" were told about jaguars seems oddly prescient of the assessment of today's world expert on jaguars, Alan Rabinowitz, who writes, "Often feared not for what it was, but for what it was believed to be, jaguars inspired a universal awe and dread that was predominantly of a mystical nature, the fear of an animal possessed of supernatural powers and only partly of this earth." Rabinowitz, *An Indomitable Beast,* 36–37.

[121] Fausto, "Se Deus Fosse Jaguar," 396.

[122] Fausto notes that the Parakaña of Brazil also appear to have undergone a "jaguarization" of beliefs in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, due to different sociopolitical experiences than the Guaraní. Fausto, *Warfare and Shamanism,* 224–225.

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modus operandi for jaguar behavior as it appears in this limited window of the historical record, it was to ignore and thus undermine any human attempt to contain them, either literally or symbolically. Jesuits, Guaraní, Moxos and the many indigenous peoples in the Paraguay and Moxos missions showed impressive consensus in approaching live jaguars. As Jesuit records show, they reacted self-protectively and violently to jaguar attack; they also agreed that jaguar intrusions were fearsome signs from a superhuman realm, though they may have disagreed about which realm and what the signs meant. But jaguars were not part of this consensus. They agreed to nothing. These animals kept the high-stakes game for souls interesting and plausible on this frontier precisely because they seemed to be participating, but they were not following human rules. Jaguars deserve to be written back into the history of Christianity for the real complexity and ambiguity they brought to the American mission field, and for reminding us of "all these possible small, unpredictable perturbations with large effects" on the human past.[123]

[123] Alan de Queiroz, *The Monkey's Voyage: How Improbable Journeys Shaped the History of Life* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 302.

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