

Satan and his World of Darkness (TRRS6020)

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Topic of today

- **The figure of Satan in Latin America:**
spiritual encounter
between Christianity
and other religions



Structure of today

1. Introduction: The devil among the Purhépecha
2. Encounter between Christianity and indigenous religions
3. The devil in Latin America today



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1. Introduction: The devil among the Purhépecha



Purhépecha today

- In the state of Michoacán, Mexico
- app. 200,000 people still speak Purhépecha language
- Only in 2000 Purhépecha language was given official recognized status in Mexico (before: emphasis on Spanish)
- Religion: Roman Catholic, however, several indigenous elements have survive

History

- in pre-Columbian time 'kingdom' of Purhépecha with the capital Tzintzuntzan (founded app. 1200 AC)
- Despite war with Aztec empire never conquered by the Aztec
- After the Spanish conquest of the Aztec empire, Tangaxuan II pledged allegiance to Spain in 1525, without any struggle (people already suffered under small pox epidemic)

Spanish conquest

- Spanish troops arrived in the area between 1529–1530 and began brutal suppression of people
- Nuño Beltrán de Guzmán (successor of Hernán Cortés) ordered to murder ('execute') Tangaxuan II in 1530 and to destroy kingdom
- From 1533 onwards Vasco de Quiroga (later made bishop) established colonial rule, including the Spanish inquisition

Religion today: Roman Catholicism



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Traditional source of income: Pottery



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Since the 1960s



- Change of pottery into terracotta / ceramic figures
- As additional source of income
- In particular around the village Ocumicho
- nationally and internationally traded via FONART

Inclusion of the devil



Explanations for devil figures

- Version 1: devil pass through the village and teased everybody. He possessed dogs, later humans who became ill and crazy; until someone got the idea to offer the devil a place, hence they made the first terracotta figure of the devil so that he could rest

Version 2

- Marcelino was trained by his grandmother in pottery though it was regarded as female occupation. Later he began to create artistic figures such as angels
- Only after a visit by the devil he changed to the creation of devil
- In 1963 he presented the figures at a market in Patzcuaro with great success



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Representation of the devil



- According to Néstor García Canclini the devil represents an important figure from the pre-Columbian religion of the Purhépecha
- However: the devil is not perceived as the evil counterpart to the Christian god but more as a trickster, an ambivalent figure
- The devil includes good and evil, sadness and laughter