

Irish News in the New Spanish Kingdoms: The Circulation of Political Information about William Lamport and Diego Nugent, 1642-1667

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Abstract

This article explores the origins of the formation of the legend created around the life of William Lamport, an Irishman burnt at the stake by the Mexican Inquisition in 1659. In order to study the origin of the legend, an analysis will be provided of the Inquisition trial of another Irishman and contemporary of Lamport, the Franciscan Diego Nugent (Diego Nugent), born in Dublin and tried for having made declarations in favour of his compatriot. The study is based on an unpublished file of the National Historical Archive of Madrid, covering the years 1657 to 1667. For the analysis, the author uses methodological reflections pertaining to cultural history, and particularly focuses on those elements that contribute to understanding the political culture of the modern period, which are present in the reconstruction of the Inquisition trial of fray Diego de la Cruz (Diego Nugent): the rumours, conspiracies and prophecies. The article therefore examines a series of important news items that circulated in the Atlantic world: the problems of dynastic succession, tensions between Portugal and England, and the circulation of forbidden books. Indications throughout the text leave open the possibility of the existence of a connection between Diego Nugent and William Lamport.

The spectacular life of William Lamport, better known as Guillermo or Guillén Lombardo, is already familiar among specialised academic circles and lovers of literature and fictional cinema. The spread of information on this Irish ‘adventurer’ has grown exponentially at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The publication and dissemination of the works of the Italian historian Fabio Troncarelli since 1999 have contributed notably to the publicity around Lombardo.

At the end of the twentieth century, Guillén’s life began to be the subject of professional historical work, improving upon the curious reconstructions that brought positivist history to occupy itself with the Irishman during the century and a half preceding that publication. Interest in the character of Lamport, an excellent humanist exponent of the Renaissance, has notably increased during the last two decades. A specific list of work dedicated to unravelling his life and actions can already be cited.

The most well-known reference is that of Troncarelli cited above, who has constructed one of the most voluminous biographies, on the

basis of documentation in European and American archives. Despite the international success of *La spada e la croce: Guillén Lombardo e l'inquisizione in Messico*, it has had little circulation in Mexico, despite the presentation of the work at two Puebla universities and its translation into Spanish. The most widespread information currently in Latin America is the significant number of European reviews of the book *La Spada*, along electronic channels.

Even lesser known is a series of theses in different contexts and at different educational levels. (2) Among these, the thesis of Andrew Konove is significant, which, using little original documentation, presents very pertinent political-cultural reflections. Other biographical works that predate that of Troncarelli are those of Gerard Ronan and Ryan Dominic Crew.

My analysis of the life of William Lamport derives from research related to political dissent, in which the pamphlets he wrote against the inquisitors act as irrefutable evidence of the phenomenon. His brilliant personality points to the political relevance not only of this singular person but also of those who surrounded him and of the circumstances that led to him

emerging from anonymity in the history of the New Spanish seventeenth century. (3)

In academic circles, the most common perception of the Irishman, even among those who admire him, is of a rather crazy, perfidious and womanising man. This is the image that Guillermo Riva Palacio, a Mexican writer, created of him in the second half of the nineteenth century. And this was none other than the transposition of the representation that the offended inquisitors portrayed of Lamport, the targets of his criticisms.

It was the least they could do, in view of the values of the time. 'Don Guillén', as he is better known, wrote harsh words against the Court of the Inquisition, related to the scant motivations that were given on the imprisonment of the accused, the seizure of their properties, the extension of reasons to despair and make the defendants confess, and other series of practices that did not accord with the Catholic faith, which are summarised in the following paragraph:

[...] and Mahoma if he came with them could be called angels in comparison to them [the inquisitors] as Mahoma taught his sect by force of arms to the public, while they (speaking of the inquisitors) are in breach of the Catholic faith with secret arms and sacrileges that are more horrendous than the invectives of Nero and with the cloak of the same faith (AHN, Inquisición, 1731, exp.53, i.365 r y v). (4)

In the descriptions of his trial, it is repeated in multiple ways that he was a false expert, 'a serious liar and idealist, a falsifier of signatures, whose political plans were chimeras' (AGI, *México* 36, n. 54). During his time he was considered in essence to be 'a bad man' (Archivo General de Indias, AGI, *México* 36, n.54, i.21) and a witness even referred to the accused as 'Don demonio' (Mr. Demon) (Archivo Histórico Nacional, AHN, *Inquisición*, 1731, i.161). His own brother, fray Juan Lombardo, confessed that they 'had never had a brotherly connection, neither in their humours nor in their way of living' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1731, exp.53, i.9) (5). This fact, and that of not putting up with his 'nonsense and lies', would be

the reasons that prevented him from defending his brother at the Inquisition.

Despite the differences between William and John Lamport, their genealogical information is compatible and without the exaggerations of the narrative of the condemned brother, they allow us to ascertain that they were from a noble family with land and inheritance, perhaps impoverished and dedicated to mercantile, military and religious activity.

In his testimonies to the Inquisition, fray Juan was also imprecise. He affirmed that he had arrived with a group of Franciscans led by fray Juan Navarro on 26 March 1640. However, his name does not appear in the delegation that went to Michoacán, while he alleged that there had been no place for him in Mexico and for that reason, he was subsequently sent to Zacatecas (AGI, *Pasajeros*, Leg.12, exp. 119).

One of the crucial aspects, and one that has not yet been studied in relation to Lamport, is the legend that induced Riva Palacio to explore the life of this man. The nineteenth-century writer declared that his interest in the Irish man was born of the amazing stories he had heard during his childhood. A century and a half later, Troncarelli would attempt to follow his lead and to demystify the misinformation about his life. He left in his work a series of signs destined to verify Guillén's relations with personalities of the Court and of high politics, as well as with other Irish in New Spanish territory. One of these is the words of praise that a Franciscan friar from Nicaragua apparently spoke of the Irish man, after his death. Although Professor Troncarelli made mention of the strange case of Diego de la Cruz, he does not cite sources (Troncarelli 1999: 328 & 334).

Thanks to the stimulating call for contributions by the Society for Irish Latin American Studies, I have once again taken up research on this person and I have managed to locate some files that could contribute to shedding some light on the obscure life of Lombardo. The revelation of the documentation held by the National Historical Archive of Spain (6) and by the General Archive of the Nation of Mexico (7) is crucial for understanding the functioning of the history of political culture in the seventeenth

century, where rumours and conspiracies, as well as behaviour of a prophetic type, nourished the scene of political life in the modern world. The indications that are contributed by the case of the friar Diego de la Cruz, also Irish, permit us to open a small window on the internal politics of the Ibero-American Kingdoms and their political connections in the international context. The news that we examine here was current in the kingdoms of New Spain and Guatemala and puts us in contact with Ireland, England, Portugal and peninsular Spain.

Biographical Data on William Lamport and fray Diego de la Cruz (Diego Nugent)

William Lamport is the real name of Guillermo Lombardo de Guzmán, who was born in Wexford, Ireland in 1615 (or 1611 according to Juan Lombardo's information) and died in Mexico City in 1659. Of those forty-four years, seventeen were lived in the prisons of the Holy Office of Mexico, which he left just two times: once he escaped in 1650 and the other time it was in order to be burnt for the multiple crimes attributed to him based on his different roles: sedition of the Spanish Crown, a heretic and inventor of other heresies, defender of heresies, apostate, and a wicked and obstinate man.

The thorny issue of his presumed contacts in the Court in Madrid between 1632 and 1642 remain to be explored, together with the relations he maintained with a group of Irish people who arrived in America on the same date that he claimed to have arrived: 1640.

The details of Guillén's biography provided by his brother, a Franciscan friar, form part of the reconstruction necessary to collect evidence on the complicated theme of the imputation. Therefore the news items contributed by the case of fray Diego de la Cruz will prove relevant.

According to the genealogy composed with the information of the Lamport brothers, some of the names of the relatives given by Guillén coincide perfectly with those provided by his brother. The difference lies in the perspective. While Guillermo showed himself proud that he and his kin had been 'equal in nobility to all of the kings and princes of the world' (AGN, *Inquisición*, v.506), (8) fray Juan refers to the life

of someone like his maternal grand-uncle, Clement Sutton, as someone who had 'misspent his estate' because he occupied himself with 'acts of bravery' and in travel. However, he said that he had been second lieutenant of a ship and married to a noble woman. Of his maternal grandfather, Leonard Sutton, he affirmed that he was a 'merchant of note' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1731, fols. 308-312). Therefore the opinion of the Inquisition on his genealogy was totally false:

As to men to whom the title of illustrious and other greater titles with advantageous posts, merits and services never heard of are attributed, as they pretend of their ancestors, all of this is false and chimerical, as this defendant is an unfortunate lowly character [...] and he has never been a person of account, and to have claimed nobility, service and grandeur of himself and his kin is [...] complete malice in order to make a distinction between him and the inquisitors to whom he owes humility in lineage (AHN, Inquisición, 1731, exp.53, fol. 363v.).

For Guillén, the inquisitors used the argument of 'the common people' in order to give 'a pretext for their fallacies'. The issue of whether Guillén was a person 'of account' or not, followed its own course in the rumours spread throughout the kingdom and as we will see below, in the accusations levelled at fray Diego de la Cruz.

About his brother, fray Juan confirmed his great interest in studies, saying that 'he was always a student', at the cost of his father's estate. Indeed, he studied with Augustinians, Franciscans and Jesuits. Nevertheless, it is on his life in England and Spain that little is known.

Relations between the brothers had deteriorated, because of the separation and more recently, Guillén's living with a woman, doña Ana Godoy Rodríguez, to whom he was not married, and who, although she was noble, was of possible Jewish convert origins, of whom it was said, she could be of 'the Portuguese race' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1731, fol. 309v). In fray Juan's report it is further perceived that there was a strong rivalry between them in relation to studies.

Although fray Juan and don Guillén had not seen each other for ten years, and according to the friar, in Madrid, he ‘scorned him with his words’, they had various meetings in the years that they shared on the peninsula: in Madrid, in Seville and in Cádiz. Both communicated mutually that they would go to the Indies. Afterwards they would see each other in Veracruz, and in Mexico City, where Guillén ‘offered him letters of reference for the *Corregidor* of Zacatecas, don Sancho de Ávila.’ However, it emerges that Guillén’s activities were secret, as in Spain it was said that ‘he did not say that he was his brother, he did not even write of his brother in letters’ (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1731, fol.311). (9)

On the same date as the meeting between Guillén and fray Juan in Madrid, 1639, the former had also contacted the mysterious Fulgencio Nugencio, an Irish man who was really called Gilbert Nugent and who had intersected with his life prior to the voyage to New Spain. Gilbert Nugent had even been accommodated at Guillén’s house. Troncarelli alludes to this person as a distant ‘cousin’ of Lamport, who had been charged with a secret mission, that of the rebellion of Irish noblemen against England (Troncarelli 1999: 138). In fact, it is Guillén himself who says - although he does not specify that the relationship is ‘distant’ - ‘and on that occasion the *baron* don Gilberto Fulgencio arrived in Madrid, *cousin* of the confessant, with a secret embassy to His Majesty, of the kingdom of Ireland and this confessant was hidden in his house for ninety days’ (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1731, i.216 and 217). (10)

The fascinating thing about all that is described here is that the friar who was introduced into these people’s lives, fray Diego de la Cruz, also had the surname Nugencio and like the Lamport brothers and a Carmelite friend of the Jesuit Michael Wadding, would travel to America in the same year 1640.

Fray Diego was not just a humble Franciscan. His family tree, reconstructed on the basis of the ‘discourse on his life’ (11) is revealing. Born in Dublin, it is said that before being religiously ordained he was officially called Diego Nugencio and he had been raised in the town of

Mullingar, where his parents had their house (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1732, fol.26v.y 27). It is probable that Diego, the name of Latin origin of the friar, is not the true one, but he never referred to himself in any other way. Meanwhile it is very clear that his paternal ancestors belonged, like those of Lamport, to ancient Catholic families of Norman origin, the Nugents. Also his maternal ancestors were recognised as the Plunketts. Both families had sacrificed soldiers and religious for the Irish causes against England and in favour of Spain and Catholicism.

It is very probable that Gilbert Nugent was a close relative of fray Diego. He declared that his family had settled in the province of ‘Guesmedia’, which is none other than the latinisation of Westmeath, a region in which the Nugent family consolidated important properties. At the beginning of the seventeenth century, Richard Nugent had obtained the Barony of Delvin, in the kingdom of Meath, the region of origin of Alfonsa Plunkett, fray Diego’s mother. The idea that the mercenary Gilbert Nugent was fray Diego’s cousin derives from his own family tree. Both had Christopher Nugent as a grandfather. The only uncle that fray Diego remembered was a certain Gerald Nugent. Guillén’s Jesuit master in Dublin was probably a relative of fray Diego’s mother, Henry Plunkett.

Diego Nugencio’s education was like that of Lamport, careful and erudite. He made his first studies in Dublin and subsequently in Spanish Franciscan houses. He was probably a few years older than Lamport. Based on the age he said he was when the Inquisition trial took place, he would have been born between 1602 and 1603. His first studies were on grammar. At the age of 18, he entered the Monte Fernando Convent in the same province, of the order of Saint Francis, where he studied arts for five years. His provincial, Valentín Bruno, gave him permission to move to Spain. He arrived in Madrid in 1630 where he contacted the general of the order, fray Bernardino de Sena (12), who marked him and gave him a patent for the province of Andalusia where he studied arts and theology, first in Cádiz and then in San Francisco de Sevilla. (13)

It should be remembered here that the Irish mobilisation in the Iberian Peninsula was part of an organised management by the Court. In the case of ecclesiastical personnel this has even been called the 'Irish Continental College Movement' (Walsh 1973).

The European life of fray Diego changed when he was assigned to a Franciscan mission that would leave for the province of Señor San Jorge de Nicaragua, where he entered as a reader. Both here and in the province of Guatemala he was commissioner and 'justice of many causes', occupying on various occasions the posts of *definidor*, custodian and guardian. The Inquisition commissioner who followed the case described him as 'of the Irish nation, a native who is neither quiet nor truthful' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1732, exp. 33, fol.2v.) (14). At the moment that he was called by the Court of Inquisition of Mexico, he was the *definidor* of the province of Nicaragua and Costa Rica, as well as the guardian of the Asunción de Nuestra Señora Convent in the village of Viejo (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1732, fol. 26v.).

At the heart of the origin of the legend

The arrival of William Lamport in Mexico is part of the mystery of his life but it could be connected to the system of espionage in place during that time. Neither his baptismal name nor the hispanicised version appear in the archives of the House of Trade and of passengers to the Indies. If, as he says, he arrived in the ship that transported the Viceroy Marquis of Villena, his name does not appear in the list of his delegation. However, we have located a detail of some importance. In a royal *cédula* of Phillip IV, it says that don Guillén had gone to America with the fleet that left Cádiz, commanded by General Roque Centeno y Ordóñez (15). At his first hearing at the Inquisition in 1642, Guillén himself testified to this, adding that he arrived on the 'large Biscayan ship of Captain don Tomás Manito' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1731, i.208). Indeed, we have found in the Seville archives that this Biscayan ship was that of *Nuestra Señora de la Concepción*, 'of six hundred and fifty tonnes, master Tomás Manito, which sailed from Cádiz, with the Fleet

of Roque Centeno y Ordóñez, for New Spain' (AGI, *Contratación*, 1184, n.1, r.2).

The system of espionage presupposed the use of people close to the Court, who arrived anonymously to the Spanish possessions and sent news directly to the Council of the Indies or to the Monarch. Fray Juan left some leads. He said that when they saw each other in Spain after 1638, - consisting of three meetings, one in Madrid (1638), one in Seville (1640) and another in Cádiz (1640) - his brother had said, as we have seen above, that he concealed their relationship. Guillén declared in 1642 before the inquisitors that 'he went to America in the spirit of expecting that the capitulations that the said ambassador [Gilbert Nugent] had offered to His Majesty would be completed' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1731, i.218), (16) while he had said to his brother in 1639 that he was going to America to 'be paid some debts by the relatives of doña Ana' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1731, fol.309). (17)

Both the Lamport brothers and fray Diego, an Irishman of the Nugent clan, left the Iberian peninsula in the same year of 1640. An Irish Carmelite, who knew another Irishman, the Jesuit Michael Wadding or Miguel Godínez, also went. The 'Nugencio' surname of the friar was not unfamiliar in Guillén's life, as we have seen above.

Burnt at the stake in 1659, we again receive news of Lamport, in the Inquisition trial of his compatriot, the Franciscan Diego de la Cruz, accused of having declared words of praise in his favour.

The denunciation of fray Diego occurred two years before William was burnt at the stake (1657). When he was called to give evidence at the Court of the Inquisition, at the beginning of 1662, Guillén was already dead (1659). The four years that passed between the moment of denunciation and that in which the friar was apprehended are the years in which the inquiries and taking of testimonies from witnesses in the provinces of Guatemala, Nicaragua and Honduras were taking place. This circumstance must have made the process more difficult but on the other hand it is another element that contributed to the formation of the rumour about the fate of Guillén Lombardo.

Recently, a news item has begun to circulate in some blogs in reference to astonishing lives or the film. There it is said that ‘Lombardo’s fame spread throughout the colonial world and served as the inspiration for various revolts, some intimate and patriotic, such as that of fray Diego de la Cruz, an Irish Franciscan who said masses in Managua, and who was taken into prison when he said a prayer from the pulpit for Guillén’s soul’. (18)

It is very probable that José Toribio Medina was the first to highlight the Franciscan friar’s praise of Guillén. Of the publications of his History of the Inquisition in Mexico he only makes mention of the event in *La espada y la cruz*. Troncarelli takes up the news item in his book and it is from this text that some websites have disseminated it. We do not yet know what the origin is of the idea that he was taken prisoner at the moment that he was saying a prayer in his name. In the historical document with which I worked it simply says that fray Diego was notified in Granada, in the province of Nicaragua at the residence of the Inquisition Commissioner himself, decreeing to him that he had four months to present himself in Mexico City, on threat of major excommunication, from 25 January 1662 (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1732, exp.33, fol.24).

The file that we found allowed us to locate the true origin of the legend and establish some possible links between Lamport and other Irish people present in New Spain between 1640 and 1667, many of whom were Franciscans.

The presence of these Irish people in the Americas makes it ever more evident that this was not casual or based on individual initiatives by impassioned ‘adventurers’. In some way this is connected to the political processes taking place in Europe and particularly among the community of exiled Irish in Spain. Among these, there were two distinct groups, that of the Old Irish, affectionate to Spain, and that of the New Irish, with loyalties to England. Two religious communities were identified with these tendencies, the Franciscans with the former and the Jesuits with the latter. The colleges had been the scene of this severe struggle (Recio 2004: 9). The famous story of Thomas Gage, an English man with an Irish father, illustrates this

distinction very well. He recounted that before receiving the offer to go to America, he had received a letter from his father in which he wrote, ‘furious’ that he had declined to enter the Company of Jesus, and ‘that he would have preferred to see me as a simple kitchen boy with the fathers of the Company, rather than a director of the entire order of Saint Dominic’ (Gage 1838: 28).

It should be noted that Gage, although he was not attracted to the Jesuits, subsequently acted in favour of England and not Spain. Nevertheless, before his trip to America, he expressed his enormous affection for a dear friend, whose presence would be indispensable in the acceptance of the invitation extended to him by fray Antonio Meléndez of the college of Valladolid. The friend without whom Gage could not take the trip was fray Tomás de León and was Irish. This would be repeated in an article subsequent to the work, where he commented that he could not conceal from fray Tomás de León the decision not to travel to the Philippines, as although ‘it is a secret that we should all keep, it was impossible for me to conceal it from fray Tomás de León, an Irish religious and one of my intimate friends’ (Gage 1838: 268) (19). The type of relations described by Gage should be carefully studied as it is in this context that the connections between compatriots and about their political interests can be explained.

On Guillén, his brother declared that when they saw each other in Madrid, he had shown him a poem written in homage to the Count-Duke of Olivares. When he lived in Mexico City it is known that he kept close contact with don Fernando Carrillo, the scribe of the city council, who gave him lodgings in his house in return for grammar lessons for his son. Years previously, the scribe had denounced a conspiracy against the Marquis of Cerralvo before the Council of the Indies. (20) In 1640, similar events occurred. Salvatierra accused the specific opposition of the two ministers of the *Audiencia* who were ready to obstruct the visit of Juan de Palafox, already before his arrival, also in 1640 (AGI, México, 35, n. 15, fol. 6, i.10). Guillén himself during this period denounced the Viceroy Marquis of Villena and according to

a witness at the trial, 'he had been instrumental' in his dispossession (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1731, i.190).

We return to fray Diego. By his own declarations, we know that his first trip to America did not occur in 1646 but in 1640. It was in the year 1646 that he specified his nationality, but there is another list in the House of Trade for 1640 in which his name appears without reference to his place of origin. He embarked then, the same year as Lamport. The first group of Franciscans with whom fray Diego signed up for the mission in the province of Nicaragua were in the charge of fray Pedro de Zúñiga, founder of various convents in the same province (AGI, *Pasajeros a Indias*, Leg.12, exp. 250). We know that Zúñiga, on his departure from Spain in July 1640, was attacked by the French armada (AGI, *Indiferente*, 112, n.115, i.2).

In his 'discourse of his life', fray Diego relates the reasons why he returned to Spain. He did this in the year 1644 in order to attend the general chapter of the order celebrated in the city of Toledo in 1645, exercising the roles of custodian and procurator of his province, that of Señor San Jorge de Nicaragua. After this, the friar requested his second trip to America with other Franciscans, on 21 July 1646. On this occasion, he was the head of the mission destined again for Nicaragua (AGI, *Pasajeros a Indias*, Leg.12, exp.760).

We still do not know with absolute certainty whether the denunciation that occurred against fray Diego in 1657 was the first (21). In 1643, a Franciscan denounced fray Diego de la Cruz, an Irishman, in Cartago for blasphemies, for saying that 'the souls of heaven could sin, that in heaven all souls have equal glory', as well as other scandalous propositions (AGN, *Inquisición*, vol. 416, exp. 30 and 35) (22). The friar, according to his own declarations, had had many posts in the province of Nicaragua and 'in the best houses.' This, however, is not proof, as in his defence he himself commented that there was another friar in the province who was also Irish, called fray Diego de la Concepción but known as fray Diego de la Cruz. Nevertheless, this was a young friar who had been ordained many years later (around 1660) and who lived in

the village of Nacaome in the province of Honduras.

The purgatory endured by fray Diego during the six years that he was prisoner in the convent of San Francisco in Mexico City and from which emerged the many details connected to the life of William Lamport and the Court, began as any other denunciation during that time.

In 1657 in the Guatemalan village of San Francisco Panajachel, the Franciscan investigator fray Juan de Torres received from his own investigation assistant a denunciation against fray Diego de la Cruz, relating a series of conversations that had occurred ten days before in a cell at the nearby convent of Tecpan Atitlán in Guatemala. The witnesses called to give evidence were all Franciscan fathers occupying high-level positions in their respective houses and coming from various regions in the province. This leads us to think that the conversations that implicated fray Diego in the praise that he had made of William Lamport took place during the Provincial Chapter of the Franciscan order. As well as that conversation, the witnesses added others that had occurred in various cells, in a street in Mexico City and at a bar on the way from Mexico City to Guatemala.

It was fray Nicolás de Santoyo, thirty-three years of age, who did the denouncing, and the main accusers were three fathers from the order: Francisco Becerra from Tecpan Atitlán, Gabriel de Amaya (23) from San Miguel de Totonicapa and Ambrosio Salado from the province of San Jorge de Nicaragua.

Pedro Robredo, preacher and guardian of San Antonio Nexapa and Pedro de Cárdenas, (24) preacher and *definidor* of the village of San Juan de Guatemala, did not implicate fray Diego. According to their declarations, they only remembered having heard some talk of the inquisitors and absolutely nothing in respect of the theme of the dynastic succession, the theme of another dangerous conversation in which the Irish friar was involved.

The praise that was imputed to fray Diego is reconstructed basically on the basis of four testimonies: that of the denouncer and those of Fathers Becerra, Amaya and Salado. The other two were not sure of having heard everything

they were asked about and only remembered a minimal part of those conversations. From these declarations, the Court of Inquisition constructed a series of dialogues in which fray Diego was to have alluded not only to Lombardo but also to the problems of the succession to the Spanish Crown.

The reports concur on the type of conversation, emanating from questions related to recent acts by the Inquisition and edicts published in 1650, in which some prison escapees were persecuted. The denouncer said that it was fray Diego who first introduced the name of Guillén and that his words expressed regret about the situation. According to the sum of testimonies collected, the friar had said that Guillén 'was a very capable student and theologian and had written against the inquisitors', 'that he had a beautiful face and figure', 'that he had been a friend of the Count Duke who had sent a cédula so that he would go to Spain', 'that they had taken Don Guillén because he had written against the inquisitors and that he had not left in the last act, nor was it known where he was, that he presumed they had returned him to Spain and that he was more Christian than the inquisitors and he had great capabilities and talent', 'that the said Don Guillén had had such a knack that he had left the prison of the Holy Office of Mexico, that he had gone to the Palace and had placed in the hands of the Viceroy a document for the King' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1732, ii.1-182). (25) These phrases express the essence of the first dialogue, which took place in the cells of the Tecpan convent.

These allow us an initial view of the construction of the legend, in which it is still not clear that fray Diego said everything that was imputed to him. He maintained for years that it was calumny. One day in 1662 he decided to declare that although he did not know whether he was Irish or English, he had spoken to him of another Franciscan and Irish friar: Miguel de Santa María.

Beyond the real knowledge that fray Diego may have had about Guillén, various points should be specified. For 1657 and before his death, the dramatic events of the Lamport case were on everybody's lips. The dissemination of edicts in the process of persecution of the escapee

defendant and of the denunciations in Mexico City brought the case to light at least from 1650. From these first conversations and although not everything was expressed by fray Diego, it is interesting to note the circulation of information that was generated around this crafty person. It is important to note the exchange of news between the two Irishmen about their compatriot, one of whom had first-hand information. It was the Irishman from Wexford, Miguel de Santa María who, according to fray Diego, told him 'that the said don Guillén was competent and that he made divinations (26) and had said bad things about the Holy Court [...] and that he knew from the same friar that the said don Guillén was the brother of a religious who has been in the province of Zacatecas'. (27) What is interesting is that this, said fray Diego, was heard in Mexico City after he had arrived there (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1732, fol.39): 'and that all that was heard in this city was the voice that was here speaking in common of the badness of the said don Guillén' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1732, fol. 49). (28)

Indeed, the witnesses who accused him also mentioned these other conversations, but those in which the protagonist was once again our friar. Another conversation that he had according to Amaya, witnessed by him and by friars Becerra and Salado, occurred some three days later in Becerra's cell. Equally, there was another outside the convent in which Nugent, conversing with a layperson, 'expressed regret that the above-mentioned was unjustly imprisoned and that *he was a man of great quality* and well connected in Spain and that the reason for his imprisonment was for having denounced and declared things that the inquisitors had done, making it known that they were not just' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1732, fol.50). (29) And on another further occasion in the village of Tepeaca, once they had left Mexico City, when they were at a bar, they heard that the inquisitors had apprehended a man of great wealth, on which the friar Diego intervened saying 'he had an estate - that was enough for the Holy Office to arrest him' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1732, fol.11v.). (30)

This information reveals that as well as fray Diego, there were people in Mexico City who

were very well informed of Guillén's case, apart from the inquisitors. In relation to the more secret information it would be difficult for it not to have been communicated by someone high up in the Holy Office and who knew perfectly well that Guillén had submitted some papers to the Viceroy and that there had been a royal *cédula* in which he requested to be sent to Spain. His relationship with the Count-Duke of Olivares, his relations with Spain and his social prestige, similarly did not originate in the *vox populi*.

It was unsurprising that fray Diego had received this information from a direct source, as, according to his own declarations, he acted as an Inquisition commissioner in the province of Nicaragua and Costa Rica. (31) It is also reasonable to think that Diego Nugent had personally known William Lamport during the years that they both lived in Spain. Although the idea that the inquisitors were 'hungry for someone else's estate' was made public in the libel cases, Guillén's words in his own defence were not along that vein, such as: 'my zeal for the Church is notorious and for His Majesty, more so than that of the Inquisition' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1731, fol. 366), (32) which is disturbingly reminiscent of the phrase attributed to fray Diego in which he had said that Guillén was 'more Christian than the inquisitors' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1731, fol.53).

The culmination of the accusations against fray Diego was not, however, the moment at which he was incriminated for praise of a defendant still being tried by the Inquisition. Although these comments resulted in extreme danger for those who made them, because they could be associated with the crime of being an accessory, (33) they were less delicate than the ironies and criticisms of the monarch himself, as they could be branded as a crime against His Majesty. This accusation in the trial is the one for which there was least proof, but it is also complicated to reduce this to a simple staging by fray Juan de Torres and the three monks who made the main accusations. Although there were numerous trials of religious people at that time, this does not seem to have been a sufficient motive to charge fray Diego with such a serious crime. (34)

The friar from Honduras, fray Gabriel de Amaya, related that days before they had spoken to Guillén in fray Diego's cell, they had been conversing about the lack of a male successor in the royal house of Spain. There, fray Diego made a prophetic declaration: 'that a foreign king had to be sought', whereupon Amaya asked him why he said that. Fray Diego responded: 'how bad for Spain has Charles V been?' To which Amaya responded: give me another Charles V! Fray Diego was of the opinion that if the monarchs could not have a male child with a first wife, they should marry again after two or three years. His companion responded ironically that if it did not work out with the second wife, did he believe that he should marry a third and a fourth – what would the Moors and the Turks say about a Catholic monarch being able to have three or four wives? (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1732, fols. 5-10).

The theme of the succession of the monarchs had been part of a private conversation between fray Diego and fray Gabriel and this is the reason why they could not retrieve more declarations. This represented a political theme of great interest at the time. Apart from the blasphemous and heretical character of these words – as they were opposed to the sacrament of marriage – these opinions lead us to face a contemporary discursive reality. Philip IV, one of the longest-governing Spanish monarchs, was also a controversial king, both in his international policy and in dynastical affairs. At the moment that it is presumed that de la Cruz expressed his dissident opinions, the monarch had still not had a male child to succeed him to the throne. With his first wife, Elizabeth of Bourbon, he had six daughters and one son, Prince Baltasar Carlos, who died at a young age. After Elizabeth's death, he had a second marriage to Mariana of Austria, but his only male successor would not be born until 1661, five years after fray Diego expressed his disapproval. The words of the friar were probably part of a polemic voice that was running through the Court and the streets, denunciations that criticised his libertine character and the numerous children that he had outside of wedlock.

On the other hand, the idea that this would lead to 'the seeking of a foreign king in Spain' ended up as a premonition, in view of the fact that this indeed happened in the case of the marriage of his son, the 'bewitched' Charles II, bringing about the end of the dynastic house of the Spanish Habsburgs.

This theme is also present in the prophecies of the famous nun Mother María de Ágreda, spiritual counsellor of Philip IV. It would not have been unusual for the Irish friar to have come across her texts in Spain. His own provincial, who had received him in Spain, fray Bernardino de Sena, was the notary of the nun's book.

In his defence, fray Diego allowed an issue of some interest to emerge. This is that of the national loyalties and the relationships of the Irish exiled with the king and with Spain, as they had 'always loved the monarchs of Spain and Spain itself very much as they have lived there for so much time in the service of the Lord our God' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1732, fol.39v.): (35)

*[...] This confessor wished and wishes that the King of Spain lives a long life until he leaves great heirs for the conservation of Christianity and also as he has never known another king and has received goods from his generous hand, as for twenty-two years he was maintained in the Indies as a chaplain and preacher of doctrine to the Indians [...] how little he loved the monarchs of England and those of his nation, as they had tyrannised the kingdom of Ireland and had robbed them of their estates and in many cases of their lives (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1732, fol. 45). (36)*

The point of view of the friar needs no further explanation. Nevertheless, the inquisitors did not mention the possible relations of Spain or Ireland to England. It is he who provides these details in the questioning that was undertaken of him on the arrival of a foreign king. At a hearing he admitted having spoken of the king, but said that the only thing he could have said was 'God protect His Majesty until he has heirs because his kingdoms could not be seen with works' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1732, fol. 49). (37)

These points leave a trace of doubt around the total innocence of fray Diego in relation to his capacity to question political events of the

dynastic type and even to covertly criticise the proceedings of the inquisitors against one of his kind. The phrase is also relevant because in his proclamation of rebellion, Guillén not only sought to make himself king, but also said that he was the son of Philip III and the Countess de la Rosa. A witness declared to have heard him speak 'with very little respect and much audacity against King Philip IV our Lord, gossiping about his government and saying that he only awarded flatterers and that there was no Spanish person who was not a traitor, that only the Irish were loyal and Catholic' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1731, i.190). (38) Other denunciations, such as those we have highlighted above, lead us to believe that criticism of Philip IV was widespread, and went beyond the borders of Peninsular Spain. One denunciation based in Rome in 1639 and written by a religious, contained among its many harsh criticisms and warnings, '[...] God knows how much more your kingdom and your loyal servants can take / see it is just that they are relieved / before another king inherits it [...]' (Castro 1846: 116). (39)

The friar's concern for international affairs is also apparent in the trial. Diego de la Cruz thought that the summons from the Inquisition was related to the knowledge that he had of a Portuguese Franciscan named Juan de Fonseca. The case narrated by fray Diego to the inquisitors occurred in the first half of the 1640s, precisely during the period when the uprising happened in Portugal, which had generated a climate of strong tension with Spain and her American possessions. Before knowing the reasons why the Inquisition had summoned him, fray Diego presumed it was because of the animosity that had emerged between him and Fonseca, whose religious vows had been put in question. In relation to this possible enemy and author of calumny, fray Diego told of his travels of *Tierra Firme*. He related how in the year 1640 he had met him at the convent of Cartagena, leaving him there when he left for Nicaragua. He met him again in Panamá in 1644 when he was going to the general chapter of the order in Spain. Subsequently, Fonseca had lived in the province of Nicaragua where he had quarrels with other religious and with the *Corregidor* of the village of Realejo, don Diego de Ibarra. In these quarrels, they insulted him, shouting

'Jewish dog'. He therefore required permission to enter the priesthood, and information on him was required in Spain. Fray Diego presumed that Fonseca was his denouncer as he threatened to present himself before the Court of Inquisition in order that they restore his honour. (40) However, the fact is that he never did that, nor did he ever meet fray Diego again. Nevertheless, the case breeds doubt, as fray Diego recounted that he defended the friar Fonseca from Corregidor Ibarra's harassment – although he was also involved in the request of the required documentation that would authorise him to be a preacher of the doctrine.

Another curious story that emerged during the trial is that which leads us to establish a relationship between fray Diego and another Irishman, his namesake, who was really called Diego de la Concepción - whom he could have been confused with. Fray Diego had met this Franciscan in Guatemala, and possibly wrote letters to him. We know that his namesake could have had in his hands the first edition of Thomas Gage's work, saying of the description that he gave of the chaplain Andrés Lins: 'that it contained heresies and that the author was a follower of Saint Dominic called fray Thomas, his surname is not remembered, of English nationality and born in London, dedicated to Cromuel [*Cromwell*], who did not know who he was' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1732, fol. 38r.). (41)

Therefore, the case of fray Diego also provides information about the circulation of a forbidden book in the provinces of Central America. An English sailor who died on don Nicolás Justiniano's ship that came by the gulf, had left it in the hands of a member of St. John of God. He knew English and held on to it. Then, it fell into the hands of fray Diego's namesake, to whom the previous keeper entrusted the book, 'for him to see it' (AHN, *Inquisición*, 1732, fol. 38v.), as he also understood the language in which the book was written. The reputation of both religious was tarnished by this information, as, according to the chaplain of the Bishop of Guatemala and fray Diego's informer, the first religious had sought to marry, and the second had taken with him on the way to El Salvador a work that contained many heresies. These were the reasons why Lins and fray Diego may have

thought that the young religious had been confused with the other, our protagonist of 53 or 54 years.

Final Considerations

From the news items that appear in Diego Nugencio's trial, the importance of the rumours of the time are in evidence, rumours that were not insignificant and on the contrary, point to a notable network of communication of news, some quite dangerous. Therefore it is clear that the Lamport case did not go unnoticed in its time, and that it was used to promote loyalties and disloyalties. Although Nugencio did not say everything that it was said that he said, it is true that at some moment he expressed regret for his compatriot. On the other hand, Guillén's name was able to produce reactions that could have been used for political causes, such as displacing undesirable candidates for religious posts. In this case the religious dynamism of fray Diego, as well as his nationality, played an important role against him.

Equally, this informs us of the existence of close networks of communication between people of Gaelic origin in American territory. From this case it is clear that Diego Nugencio, Juan Lombardo, Diego de la Concepción, Miguel de Santa María, Thomas Gage, Tomás de León and Guillermo Lombardo himself, as Fabio Troncarelli suspected, exchanged impressions with those of their nation.

Fray Diego's defence was based on the equivocal idea that those who testified against him were surely his sworn enemies, revealing that he had many. He was so convinced of this that he mentioned in a detailed way the name of each one of them and the crimes that he had seen in the exercise of their functions internally within the Franciscan order and as an Inquisition commissioner. He also makes a parallel list of lay enemies. These data provide further details on the mobility of fray Diego in the Franciscan provinces of the *Audiencia* of Guatemala. From these two lists, no name coincides with those of the declaring witnesses in his Inquisition trial. None of those appear, who, like the Corregidor don Diego de Ibarra, had threatened him more harshly. Neither did the Portuguese friar Juan de Fonseca, fray

Antonio de Sierra or fray Cristóbal López de la Raza appear, with whom he had disputes for not supporting them in their upwardly mobile careers in the province. Equally absent were the friars put on trial for crimes such as the unspeakable sin, sale of a free black, setting fire to the mayor's house, killing the livestock of the confraternities or the abuse of indigenous populations.

The inquisitors who finalised fray Diego's trial were not the same ones who passed judgement on Guillén. While in Guillén's trial, inquisitors with a black list of crimes were implicated, such as Bernabé de la Higuera y Amarillas or Juan de Mañozca himself, in that of fray Diego, the auditor of the Inquisition intervened, Pedro de Medina Rico, subsequent author of the denunciation of the faults of the former inquisitors. Nevertheless, neither he nor Juan de Ortega Montañés accepted the innocence of fray Diego and assured that they were convinced that behind his obstinacy in not confessing other serious crimes were hidden. The many letters that he wrote pleading for mercy during the years of his trial were not enough, the intervention of his lawyer was not enough, and neither was the letter written to the Council of the Indies. The witnesses of his conversations were all prestigious preachers in the province. He lived for six years as a recluse in the convent of San Francisco in Mexico, and as soon as the sentence was established he did not manage to get it modified. The only consideration that they made for him was because of his history in serving the Catholic faith, which was part of the ecclesiastic privilege. This was to not apply torture, for him to remain a prisoner in the convent and to permit him just once to visit the chapels of the virgin of Guadalupe and of los Remedios. The crime examined and the sentence given left an indelible mark on the future life of fray Diego de la Cruz.

Notes

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2 Other works are cited in the bibliography.

Nothing would prevent him from being taken from the hall of the Inquisition with neither cord nor chapel and with one candle in his hand, for the crime of slight suspicion of crimes against the Catholic faith. He was obliged to renounce *de levi* in front of the members of each religious order of the city. This outcome led him to lose his positions, his honour and his esteem. Even so, the Irish Franciscan did not give up and the last news we have of him is that after the trial and the renunciation, he requested a copy of the trial in order to seek the assistance of the general provincial of his order in Spain. There we lose trace of him forever.

With us remains the 'slight suspicion' that this Irishman, though without malice, spoke of his compatriot, with whom it is possible that there existed more than a 'blood tie' and they were connected by some political relationship or a corporative nexus of the territorial type. In Lord Baltinglass's rebellion in 1581 and in the context of the uprising in Ireland against Elizabeth I, various members of the Nugent, Sutton and Lamport families participated and were executed (*Catholic Encyclopedia*, Fernández 1991). Some of the witnesses who testified against fray Diego had expressed that he spoke of Guillén 'as an impassioned supporter of his nation'. At any rate, this episode contributed *sui generis* to a scandal, spreading the fame of William Lamport in Hispanic America in the seventeenth century. A scandal promoted by a member of the religious community that threatened the interests of the defenders of the faith themselves, as the inquisitors referred to themselves, and whose reputation in those days was quite dubious.

Natalia Silva Prada

3 On Silva Prada, see the articles in the bibliography.

4 “y Mahoma con ellos si viniera pueden ser llamados ángeles en comparación de estos [los inquisidores] porque Mahoma enseñó su secta por fuerza de armas a lo público y por lo que era, más estos (habla de dichos señores inquisidores) prevarican de la fe católica con armas secretas y sacrílegas mas horrendas que las invectivas de Nerón y con capa de la misma fe.”

5 “nunca tuvieron conexión fraternal ni en los humores ni en el modo de vivir”.

6 AHN, *Inquisición*, 1732, exp. 33.

7 AGN, *Inquisición*, vol. 416, exp. 35 y vol. 512, exp. 4.

8 “iguales en nobleza a todos los reyes y príncipes del mundo”.

9 “no dijese que era su hermano, ni le escribiera de hermano en las cartas.”

10 “y en aquesta ocasión llegó a Madrid el barón don Gilberto Fulgencio primo de este confesante con una embajada secreta a su majestad, del reino de Irlanda a quien este confesante tuvo noventa días escondido en su casa”.

11 Expression used to get to know the genealogical past of people on trial at the Inquisition, of whom it was always suspected that they had bloodlines that affected their Catholic beliefs. It refers to the “day-to-day” life and today has become an excellent source for biographical reconstruction.

12 He was on the commission that studied the orthodoxy of the text *Mística ciudad de Dios* by Mother María de Jesús de Ágreda, which Philip IV was fond of.

13 Founded in 1596 by fray Buenaventura Calata Girona. In 1600 it was relocated to San Vicente Street.

14 “de nación irlandés, el natural poco quieto y poco verdadero”.

15 Letter from the king in request of Guillén de Lombardo. 1643. There were 18 ships in the fleet and only the captains are mentioned. AHN, *Inquisición*, 1731, exp. 53.

16 “se fue a América con ánimo de esperar que se cumplieran en Irlanda las capitulaciones que el dicho embajador [Gilbert Nugent] ofreció a su Majestad”

17 “cobrar unas libranzas de los parientes de doña Ana”.

18 “la fama de Lombardo se expandió por todo el mundo colonial y sirvió de inspiración para varias revueltas, algunas íntimas y patrióticas, como aquélla de fray Diego de la Cruz, un franciscano irlandés que oficiaba misas en Managua, que fue llevado a la cárcel en el momento en que elevaba desde el púlpito una oración por el alma de Guillén” - Ana Victoria Morales’s Blog, ‘Viajar por Irlanda. La isla esmeralda’ (<http://unariocuartenseenirlanda.blogspot.com>).

19 “es un secreto que todos debíamos guardar, me fue imposible ocultársela a fray Tomás de León, religioso irlandés y uno de mis íntimos amigos”.

20 Letter addressed by the Viceroy Salvatierra to the king. Carrillo wrote to the king that Cerralvo wanted to rise up against the kingdom. AGI, México, 35, n. 15, fol.6, i.10.

21 My sabbatical in Europe prevented me from consulting the sources during the composition of this article. I think that it will be very useful to do this in the future.

22 “las almas del cielo podían pecar, que en el cielo todas las almas tenían igual gloria”. In the same year and place, fray Juan de Bustos was denounced for saying that “it was common to preach stories from the pulpit”. AGN, *Inquisición*, vol. 503, f.15. In 1625 there were scandals in Cartago because of a lack of knowledge of censorship and excommunications. Cartago belonged to the jurisdiction of the Bishopric of Nicaragua and Costa Rica.

23 In 1650 he was guardian of the convent of Santiago Atitlán. He had conflicts with the Corregidor Francisco de Castellanos, who seems to have tried to murder him. In 1657 he was named Provincial Custodian in Comayagua, Honduras (Aguirre 1972).

24 Native of Guatemala, considered a great master of Indian languages. He died in 1666 (Adams 1952).

25 “era muy hábil estudiante y teólogo y que había escrito contra los inquisidores”, “que era de linda cara y talle”, “que había sido amigo del conde duque que había enviado cédula para que fuese a España”, “que habían cogido a Don Guillén porque había escrito contra los inquisidores y que no había salido en el auto último, ni se sabía a donde estaba, que presumía le habían despachado a España y que era más cristiano que los inquisidores y era de muy buena capacidad y talento”, “que dicho Don Guillén había tenido tal ardid que se había salido de la cárcel del Santo Oficio de México, que había ido a Palacio y puesto en manos del Virrey un pliego para el Rey”.

26 This refers to the astrological exercises by which Guillén attempted to divine the future of various important personages.

27 “que el dicho don Guillén era hábil y que levantaba figuras y que había hablado mal del Santo Tribunal [...] y que supo del mismo fraile que era el dicho don Guillén hermano de un religioso que ha estado en la provincia de Zacatecas”.

28 “y que solo oyó en esta ciudad la voz que ha estado aquí hablar en común de las maldades del dicho don Guillén”.

29 “lastimándose del susodicho que estaba injustamente preso y que era un hombre de muy gran calidad y bien emparentado en España y que la causa de haberle preso era por haber denunciado y declarado las cosas que habían obrado los señores inquisidores dando a entender no eran justas”.

30 “ya tenía hacienda, pues basta para que el Santo Oficio le prenda”.

31 For example, one of his enemies was fray Juan de Bustos, whom fray Diego himself had put on trial for sedition and who was also accused in Cartago in 1643.

32 “es notorio mi celo a la Iglesia y a su Majestad más que cuanta Inquisición ha habido”.

33 Basically this was the crime of providing assistance, favour and refuge to someone considered to be a heretic, although it also includes the act of obstructing the decisions of the Holy Office.

34 One fray Juan de Torres, Franciscan, managed to be named Bishop of Nicaragua and Costa Rica but died before taking up the position in 1659.

35 “que a los reyes de España y a España ha amado siempre y ama mucho porque en ella ha vivido tanto tiempo en el servicio de Dios Nuestro Señor”

36 “[...] Este confesante ha deseado y desea que viva el Rey de España largos años hasta dejar herederos grandes para la conservación de la cristiandad y más cuando nunca conoció a otro rey y ha recibido bienes de su liberal mano pues ha veintidós años que le sustenta en las Indias por capellán y doctrinero de los indios [...] cuan mal quiere a los reyes de Inglaterra y a los de su nación, pues tiene tiranizado al reino de Irlanda y a todos quitándoles sus haciendas y a muchos las vidas”.

37 “Dios guardase su majestad hasta que tuviese herederos porque no se viesen sus reinos con trabajos”.

38 “con muy poco respeto y mucho atrevimiento contra el rey Felipe IV nuestro señor, murmurando de su gobierno y que no sabía premiar sino a los lisonjeros y que no había español que no fuese traidor, que solo los irlandeses eran los leales y católicos”.

39 “[...] sabe Dios que más no puede tu reino y fieles vasallos/mira que es justo aliviallos/antes que otro rey lo herede [...]”

40 On this act, this could be the report on insulting a Portuguese religious, before a numerous audience – as recounted by fray Diego – in Tegucigalpa in the year 1646. AGN, *Indiferente virreinal*, exp. 95, caja 5713.

41 “que contenía herejías y que era el autor un religioso de Santo Domingo llamado fray Thomas no se acuerda del apellido de nación inglés y nacido en Londres, dedicado a Cromuel, que no sabe quien fuese”.

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