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Chapter 15

Voices from the Other Side

Native Perspectives from New Spain, Peru, and North America

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European and African migrations brought waves of change to millions of people on the western side of the Atlantic world. This chapter examines indigenous responses to some of these changes in three regions of the Americas, from about the mid-sixteenth to the second half of the eighteenth centuries. Three sections consider the strategies of men and women who sought to protect and promote their interests by engaging settlers and colonial officials, criticizing existing practice, and affecting policies towards them. Each section highlights indigenous attempts to reach out across the Atlantic, to meet imperial authorities face to face, to speak to them through mediators and messengers, or to influence them with writings.

Troubles in New Spain

When the lords of Tlaxcala decided to send a delegation to the king of Spain in 1552, they designed a painting depicting their role as allies of the monarchy in the conquest of New Spain. The purpose of the delegation was to "lay Tlaxcala's troubles before the emperor." The expedition required contributions from all Tlaxcalans because the city's assets could not meet the cost of an expedition to Spain. Two years earlier, they had sent letters to the king, to no avail. Finally, in 1554, they received a royal decree authorizing their voyage.¹ Tlaxcala's strategy of appealing directly to the emperor is recorded in the Nahuatl-language minutes of the meetings of the Spanish-style town council (cabildo) of Tlaxcala, a remarkable example of early native-language alphabetic writing in Mesoamerica. Tlaxcala was a confederation of four altepetl, the Nahuatl name for a local state. Its cabildo consisted of more than 200 men who represented the hereditary lordly establishments, or tecalli, of this large state in central Mexico.

Tlaxcala had never submitted to the dominant altepetl of the 'Aztec empire'—Tenochtitlan. Tlaxcalans gave valuable support to Spanish-led forces in the war against the Mexica, for which they received certain privileges. They were not placed in encomienda, for example, and thus did not pay tribute and labour directly to a Spaniard, as did most other altepetl immediately following the conquest. The painting proposed for the emperor in 1552 probably formed the basis for a pictographic text, known today as the Lienzo of Tlaxcala. An eighteenth-century copy of the original lienzo (painting on cloth), which is now lost or destroyed, shows that native artists painted a large principal scene and numerous smaller scenes below.² The top and centre of the main scene displays the imperial crest of Spain, held by a Habsburg two-headed eagle (Figure 15.1). A pre-conquest-style hill glyph occupies the middle, representing the altepetl (literally 'water' and 'hill'). Tlaxcala's coat of arms appears at the foot of the hill, above a cross and below the façade of a chapel dedicated to the Virgin Mary. Numerous tecalli in the corners, depicted in the traditional manner as palaces with lords seated inside, surround two new churches. Lords issue forth from the four parts to meet high-ranking Spanish officials who are seated on European-style chairs. Some eighty other scenes follow, most depicting Tlaxcalans fighting alongside Spaniards in their joint conquest of New Spain. The Tlaxcalan artists selectively adapted the content of the scenes to suit their strategy, omitting depictions of their own battles against the Spaniards before they were forced to make peace with Cortés, but including multiple images that commemorate Tlaxcala's loyalty and service to the king, and their immediate acceptance of Christianity.

The cabildo records reveal some of Tlaxcala's troubles in this period. In one of the first recorded sessions, the cabildo hired an attorney to represent the city in lawsuits before the audiencia or high court of New Spain, thus revealing the cost of working within the new legal system. The council sent a letter to the emperor complaining of the encroachment of Spanish livestock on the lands of the altepetl, an issue that was to be a constant irritant. Money too was a problem. When the cabildo lacked funds to pay for religious expenses, it was forced to sell land to meet the costs; this grievance was repeated the next year. The council complained that the constant sale of assets would impoverish a 'moneyless' city, and sought to raise additional taxes and borrow money.

lands because they lacked sufficient workers to cultivate them. Only three months earlier, the Spanish viceroy had decreed to the cabildo that uncultivated lands were to be confiscated. The visit to Spain proved disappointing because in 1562 the members concluded that 'for all the trials' they had endured in serving the king they had 'been paid nothing'. That same year, the council prohibited Tlaxcalans from selling land to Spaniards, 'who have their own cities and should not live among the Tlaxcalans', and threatened offenders with a stiff penalty of 100 pesos and exile. This was not the first complaint concerning Spaniards living among them, and the cabildo contemplated sending another delegation to Spain to 'to bring the city's problems to the king's attention, but had no money to do so.  

The Tlaxcalan nobility campaigned throughout the sixteenth century and beyond for tribute relief, sending several delegations to the viceroy in Mexico City and to the king in Spain. Campaigns for exemptions and privileges resulted in numerous royal decrees in favour of Tlaxcala, but most were violated by Spaniards or diluted by royal officials. In reality, Tlaxcalans were subject to many types of tribute in kind, money payments, and labour drafts. Throughout the century, they were required to deliver 8,000 fanegas (about 13,000 bushels) of maize kernels to Mexico City annually. The assessment remained constant even as the population declined precipitously. When, at century's end, Tlaxcala fell behind on payments, cabildo officials were jailed and community land was auctioned to Spaniards to meet payments. Besides the maize tribute, Tlaxcala also provided labour service to the Spanish city of Puebla, and other types of monetary tribute. Certain privileges were granted to individuals, but the community as a whole derived little benefit from the decrees of exemption. Despite their historic 'favoured' status as an armatorial city, their claims to having assisted the conquest, and the assignment of privileges to certain lords, Tlaxcala declined in population and wealth as rapidly as most other altepetl in and around the Basin of Mexico.  

Tlaxcala was not alone in reaching across the Atlantic to appeal directly to the sovereign, and in constructing selective images of the past to promote present concerns. In 1560, for example, the cabildo of Huecuzinco urged the king in a reverential form of Nahua to recognize their plight and to reward them for their past service by relieving them from onerous taxation and tribute amounting to 14,800 pesos annually and an equal number of fanegas of maize.  

Stressing the enormity of this exaction from a community that possessed no mineral wealth, they described themselves as the king's 'poor commoners' who bowed humbly before him 'from very far'. The lords asked plaintively, 'have we done something wrong?' 'have we committed some sin against almighty God?', and lamented that it would not be long before the king's city 'completely disappears and crumbles'. Three years later, the nobles of Xochimilco adopted the same strategy, and wrote in Spanish to request justice, particular privileges,

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3 The Tlaxcalans Act (1552-65).
5 James Lockhart, We People Here: Nahua Accounts of the Conquest of Mexico (Berkeley, CA, 1993), 288-97.
and a reduction in tribute and labour service. They also complained of Spaniards who competed directly with them for resources, notably lands and labourers, and contended that they paid more taxes under Spanish rule than previously, 'even when Motecuhzoma tyrannized this land'.

As the Nahua cabildo of Tlaxcala appealed to the emperor, a Nahua man named Francisco Manuel complained to the Council of the Indies. Francisco, a slave from Mexico living in Spain, was among the hundreds of Indian slaves who, over the course of the sixteenth century, petitioned for manumission to the Council of the Indies, on the grounds that they had not been seized in a 'just war'. They took advantage of royal legislation in their favour, which did not apply to African slaves in Iberia. Francisco understood Nahua, his native language, but answered questions in Spanish, having lived in Spain since he was a child. Unlike most in similar circumstances, Francisco did, in fact, win his freedom in 1553.

The Indian slave trade to Iberia went unchecked until the New Laws of 1541 prohibited Indian slavery in 'pacified' areas of the Indies. Precise figures are uncertain, but several thousand Indians were shipped to Spain during the sixteenth century, of whom as many as half died en route. The vast majority of Indian slaves to cross the Atlantic went to Lisbon and Seville and worked as unskilled labourers. They would have stood out even in the multi-ethnic milieu of cities such as Seville because they were branded on the forehead or face, and those who were granted freedom, whether by their owners or by the Council of Indies, worked for low wages or begged in the streets. Few returned to their homeland because they lacked the resources or royal licence to do so.

Despite the New Laws, slavery in Spanish America persisted among the 'unpacified' peoples, who remained subject to 'just war', especially on the military frontiers to the north. Whereas the conquests of the sedentary peoples in the centre and south of New Spain were quick and permanent, fighting in many areas of the north persisted, and indigenous groups resisted more successfully than the Mesoamericans because they were fewer, scattered, and more mobile. In contrast, sedentary peoples mounted few rebellions that united communities across regions, and officials managed to suppress many local uprisings before they spread. If the Mesoamericans and Europeans had much in common, the northern groups seemed different and therefore threatening. Spanish institutions of coerced labour such as the encomienda did not work well in the north, where there was no precedent for organizing tribute payments and labour drafts.

The region received little attention until Spaniards located silver mines which attracted thousands of settlers. The so-called Mixtón Wars of the 1540s against the Caxcanes and other groups marked a cycle of violence that continued for centuries. In the vast expanses of the north, native bands raided Spanish settlements and ambushed mule trains. In response, Spanish troops were stationed permanently in presidios or forts.

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The soldiers supplemented their meagre salaries by selling Indians as slaves and sending them to other parts of New Spain or the Caribbean. Another northern adaptation was the mission, where people from a large surrounding area were congregated. The mission, usually located near presidios, was a typical feature of Spanish and Portuguese expansion into the under-populated regions of the Americas. Another tactic in the north was to use 'friendly Indians' as buffer populations. In 1591, after several appeals from the king and the viceroy, an expedition of some 400 Tlaxcalan families set out to settle in the north, accompanied by Franciscans. Subsequent expeditions to Saltillo, Coahuila, Texas, and Nuevo Mexico proceeded from the original 400 families and their descendants. The sedentary 'Pueblo Indians' of 'New Mexico' reminded the Spaniards of settlements in central Mexico, hence the names for the groups and place. Tlaxcalans built one of the first churches in Santa Fe, founded in 1609.

According to a prolific Nahua historian who went by the name of Don Domingo de San Antonio Muñón Chimalpahin Quauhtlehuanitzin, New Mexico was the probable site of Aztlán, the legendary place of origin of the Aztec people. Born in 1579 in Amecameca, Chimalpahin moved to nearby Mexico City when he was young. From 1593 to the mid-1620s he was educated by, and lived among, Franciscans in Mexico City. Chimalpahin's writings treat both of the pre-conquest past and his own present times, focusing on events in and around Mexico City. He is known especially for his annals, a genre of Nahua writing that was continued after the conquest. Chimalpahin wrote a *Diario*, a 284-page Nahua-language text, which is a selective and personal rendering of references to the people, places, and events of his day, covering the period from the 1590s to 1615. The text is organized into year entries that refer to both the Christian calendar year and its Nahua equivalent. He described public ceremonies involving high officials, religious feasts, and processions; recorded plagues and epidemics, earthquakes and floods, solar eclipses and comets, storms and other natural events; and reported crimes and executions, including inquisitorial autos da fé and sensational events such as an aborted black rebellion in Mexico City.

The *Diario* referred also to events in Europe, from the death of a Spanish king to papal affairs in Rome. Perhaps more than any other indigenous writer in this period, Chimalpahin understood the global nature of the Spanish empire, for he was attentive to both the Atlantic and Pacific worlds. The *Diario* made frequent mention of events in China (i.e. the Philippines) and Japan, and detailed a delegation of Japanese men passing through Mexico City on their way to Europe. New Spain was a bridge between the two oceans with the ports of Acapulco and Veracruz as its gates. He reported sightings of English or Flemish pirates waiting on the Pacific coast for ships coming...
from China, and seemed relieved that Portuguese troops were being moved to the fort in Acapulco to repel the thieves.

But Chimalpahín never lost sight of matters concerning indigenous people, especially the communities in and around the Basin of Mexico. His Diario demonstrated that the four-part altepetl of Mexico Tenochtitlan did not disappear when the Spaniards made it the capital city of New Spain. His consciousness of the city's many ethnic and racial groups reinforced his own firm Nahua identity. His purpose in writing the Diario in his own language was not to achieve some strategic objective in the manner of the lienzos but, as he said himself, to preserve memories of the past for future generations of Nahuas, often using older pictorial writings as the basis of his information.

Although the indigenous presence in Mexico City was still palpable nearly a century after the conquest, it is difficult to overlook the enormous consequences of the European presence in Mexico City. What could be more profound than the attempt to drain the water from the lake surrounding Mexico City? The desagüe, as the drainage project was called, sought to end the periodic floods that threatened the city. At one point, Chimalpahín related two separate but significant events. In 1604, in order to build a wooden wall to protect the city from water that descended from forests surrounding the Basin of Mexico, the viceroy paradoxically ordered several communities to chop down thousands of trees from the nearby mountain slopes, thus further deforesting the wooded areas that might have checked the flow of water. Ten years later, Chimalpahín reported that as many as 50,000 indigenous men were killed during the course of excavating a mountain side for the desagüe project. The drainage project was ultimately completed, at enormous human cost and with drastic environmental consequences for the Valley and City of Mexico.

The greatest consequence of the European presence that Chimalpahín chronicled in his annals, the gravest cause of trouble for indigenous peoples, was the introduction of unknown infectious diseases. Despite the severe implications of depopulation, most indigenous communities throughout New Spain managed to survive in some form throughout much of the viceroyal period, protected by royal legislation that recognized pueblos de indios as corporate entities. Each of these thousands of pueblos, identified by both indigenous and patron saint's names, maintained a landholding base and a group of local governing elites. Most communities were reduced to smaller settlements that had undergone congregación and other Spanish attempts at reorganization. In more remote regions of New Spain, where native populations were large in comparison to non-Indians, where there was little profit potential (no mineral wealth) to attract many Spanish migrants, various indigenous customs and practices continued in altered but recognizable ways. In Oaxaca, for example, many Mixtec hereditary rulers, called caciques (male) and cacas (female) by Spaniards, adapted to changes and maintained their high status, using the Spanish legal system to their advantage. Whereas the Nahua teocalli or lordly establishments in central Mexico had declined by the middle of the seventeenth century, its Mixtec equivalent continued to function and thrive in many places into the eighteenth century. Even in the Valley of Oaxaca, site of Hernán Cortés' marquesado, Mixtec and Zapotec caciques and communities were among the largest landholders by the end of the colonial period.11

By the middle of the seventeenth century, the native population of New Spain reached its nadir and began to increase gradually. Overall population growth in the colony led to an increased demand for land in more densely populated areas. In response, a programme called the composiciones de tierras restricted corporate landholdings to a townsite measured from a pueblo's centre (usually its church). It established the limits of community holdings, raised revenue by granting titles to lands beyond the pueblo's townsite, and repossessed all 'vacant' land occupied without grant or title, which was legally royal domain. Officials auctioned off repossessed lands to the highest bidder, usually Spaniards. In general, Spanish haciendas (agricultural and livestock estates) accrued land at the boundaries of indigenous corporate landholdings. The programme forced pueblos and individuals to furnish or purchase proof of possession. Some resorted to producing their own titles, not fully aware of a legitimate title's format, content, or language, submitting their home-made 'primordial' titles to Spanish authorities as evidence of possession since 'time immemorial'. The composiciones prompted a fascinating genre of indigenous writing designed to protect communal resources from outsiders.12 The law also gave constituent parts of a community incentive to seek autonomy as a separate 'pueblo' in order to claim its own townsite, contributing to the fragmentation of larger altepetl and the proliferation of small pueblos. Most of this fragmentation was based on pre-existing settlements and modes of organization, however. Nevertheless, European principles of private and communal property had profound long-term consequences for indigenous communities, as did the introduction of a money economy, which was fuelled by American silver.

**'No Remedy' in Peru**

The Atlantic world spilled over into the 'South Sea' and reached the shores of the Andean region, where Spaniards encountered a large population and tremendous mineral wealth, which assured Spanish determination to incorporate it into the Atlantic world. As in the Caribbean and Mesoamerica, contact here was abrupt and dramatic. The collapse of the Inca empire was followed by conflict between Spanish factions and, in the highlands, where most indigenous people lived, a millenarian-style revolt against Spanish dominance called the 'Taquis Onqoy (Quechua for 'dancing

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12 Paula López Caballero, Los títulos primordiales del centro de México (Mexico, 2003).
Native prophets in the 1550s predicted the end of Spanish rule and called for the return of ancient *huacas* or sacred spirits. In 1572, the Spanish viceroy captured Tupac Amaru, the last claimant of the Inca dynasty who ruled the remains of the empire in the highlands. The Inca lord was tricked into a trance, convicted of treason, and beheaded in the main square of Cuzco. The colonists consolidated power, organized massive labour drafts, and cleared the way for silver mining in and around Potosí, perhaps the world’s richest mining site. In the formative years of Philip II’s reign, specie began to flow across the Atlantic, enabling the crown to continue its ambitious foreign policy from Madrid and making the Atlantic overseas empire commercially attractive for Seville and other European financial centres.13

Don Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala must have witnessed many of these sweeping changes in his lifetime. Born around 1534, Guaman Poma was a Quechua-speaking native of the Huamanga region of Peru. His mother had been a Spaniard’s mistress, with whom she gave birth to a mestizo son who became a friar, and later married Don Felipe’s indigenous father. Guaman Poma worked most of his life as a bilingual translator and aide for Spanish officials. In his own words, after working in the Andean countryside for nearly thirty years, he returned to Huamanga to find his home occupied and his land confiscated. When he protested, the Spanish corregidor (chief magistrate) and priest expelled him from the province. He then travelled to protest at Lima, the viceregal capital. On his journey he saw many injustices, including *mita* (a Quechua term for labour drafts) workers being exploited in the mines of Huancavelica and women being abused by Spaniards in Huaroquiri. Once in the capital, he attempted to see the viceroy but was rejected. Around this time, he completed his *Nueva corónica y buen gobierno* and gave it to a viceregal official in Lima, who apparently sent it to Madrid.14 The manuscript, completed about 1615, consisted of nearly 1,200 folio pages and 500 illustrations. It represents an unsponsored, unedited, and outspoken native perspective on the colonial system, informed by many years of interaction with Spaniards and colonial institutions (Figure 15.2).

Although there are many Quechua (and some Aymara) words and phrases sprinkled throughout the manuscript, Guaman Poma used Spanish rather than his native language because he wrote to a Spanish audience. In fact, he addressed the king. He utilized typical Spanish genres of the period—the chronicle, a standard medium, and the ‘good government’ discourse—in which he proffered complaints and remedies to the king. In the ‘buen gobierno’ part, which in some respects resembles the Nahua letters to the crown discussed above, Guaman Poma unleashed a diatribe against all Spaniards in the countryside. He complained of Spanish officials and priests who manipulated ethnic groups to maintain their power, and of mestizos as the undesirable offspring of Spanish men and native women, who contributed to the decline of the native population. Ideally, he wanted a native world that kept its traditional authorities and made its own decisions, independently of Spaniards. This idea, advanced by Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas and other religious in the sixteenth century, had become anachronistic and unrealistic by the early seventeenth century. Guaman Poma, however, advocated for Spanish law and Christianity, but he considered that both were being ignored in Spanish Peru. He revealed the depth of his frustration by frequently punctuating his narrative with the phrase *y no hay remedio,* ‘and there is no remedy’. The author died a poor, frustrated, and unknown man shortly after handing over his manuscript in Lima.

and it is unlikely that the king or any important official ever read the work, which came
to scholarly attention only in the twentieth century.

Guaman Poma finished his manuscript about the same time that a prominent mestizo
Peruvian writer had completed a second volume on the history of Peru, but the two never
met in person. Gómez Suárez de Figueroa was born out of wedlock in 1559 in Cuzco to an
Inca noblemenwoman and a high-ranking Spanish conquistador. Typical of the sexual
relations between Spanish men and indigenous women that Guaman Poma denounced
(sexual unions between Spanish women and indigenous men were very rare), Gómez’s
father never married his mother, but he provided for their son, who was educated in Cuzco
in the European, Christian tradition. As a boy, he observed the violent conflict between
Spanish factions in Peru, in which his father was involved. He went to Spain when he was
21 years old and adopted his father’s name, Garcilaso de la Vega. He approached the noble
house of Figueroa but was rejected because he was considered an Indian, and was also
rebuffed at court, largely because his father was implicated in Gonzalo Pizarro’s rebellion
that had resulted in the viceroy’s execution, an unforgivable act of treason. In 1569 the
younger Garcilaso served as a captain, at his own expense, in the campaign to suppress
the revolt of the Moriscos of Granada, but having received no recognition for his service
he retreated into the world of letters, and studied Italian, Renaissance philosophy,
and humanism, using the name ‘Inca’ to distinguish himself from his father and his father’s
cousin, the famous writer Juan Garcilaso de la Vega.

Although ‘Garcilaso Inca de la Vega’, as he signed himself, was not an ‘Indian’ by the
legal standards of the day, he knew the Quechua language and he celebrated his tangible
connection to that heritage. Like many peoples of mixed European, African, and indige-
nous descent who lived among native peoples of the Americas, as Guaman Poma had
attested, Garcilaso was profoundly influenced by his Andean experience. Neither a
Spaniard nor an Indian, he referred to Peru as his homeland and called himself an
Inca, even though he maintained little connection with his Inca relatives and lived twice
as long in Spain as in Peru. He resembled many prominent mestizos in Spanish America
by asserting both sides of his heritage. Mestizos like Garcilaso complicate the ethnic
category of the ‘Indian’, suggesting the flexibility of the label throughout the colonial
period, especially in cities and also in the so-called pueblos de indios or Indian towns, as
indigenous peoples everywhere came into increasing contact with ethnic others.

Garcilaso Inca de la Vega wrote two published histories in his lifetime: the Comen-
tarios reales de los Incas (Lisbon, 1609) and the Historia general del Peru (Córdoba,
1615). The first was written in honour of his mother and to defend his Inca heritage.
As a boy, he had enjoyed privileged access to both the Inca nobility and the Spanish
conquistadores. His sources for the native past were Quechua-speaking relatives of his
mother, herself the granddaughter of the Inca emperor Tupac Inca Yupanqui. He
claimed that his uncle had told him legends and traditions handed down over genera-
tions. Until the Comentarios, little had been written about the Inca and most Spanish
histories had justified colonial rule by portraying them as tyrants. He objected to such
misrepresentations of native religion and culture on the grounds that Spanish histori-
hians did not know the language and misunderstood many concepts. Instead, Garcilaso
likened the Inca to the ancient Romans and Greeks, also conveyors of great civilizations
before Christianity.

The Historia general, written in honour of his father, was designed as the second part
of the Comentarios, but was assigned a different title when published shortly after his
death. For this he relied on information from his father’s peers, relatives, and friends in
Peru to praise the accomplishments of the conquistadores and the miracles worked by
God. Garcilaso was proud to be the son of a conqueror, while accepting the
conquest as the inevitable divine prelude to a union of the Spanish and the Indian
that would be guided by Christian and Inca laws, he criticized the violence with which
the Inca had been overthrown. At times, he struggled to reconcile the demise of
the great Inca past with the greed and injustice of the conquest, and he was not afraid
to challenge published Spanish histories. For example, in one of the final chapters, which
concluded with the ‘courageous’ death of the Inca leader Tupac Amaru, Garcilaso
departed from Spanish accounts of how the Inca ruler confessed to fraud and treason
before his execution, and instead portrayed a hero who knew he was being murdered
unjustly by the viceroy. The Historia general ends on a tragic note, in contrast to the
utopian tone of the Comentarios. To Garcilaso, the Spanish conquest of Peru had not
fulfilled the promise of the great Inca past.

The impact of Garcilaso’s history is unclear but more than a century and a half after
its publication it was cited to justify a major rebellion in the highlands of Peru, led by a curaca
calling himself Tupac Amaru II. In 1780, he executed the Spanish corregidor for allegedly
abusing the Indians of the area, recruited an army, controlled large parts of the highlands,
and threatened to take over Cuzco. The old Inca capital. Tupac Amaru II had, apparently,
read Garcilaso’s writings, and colonial authorities then prohibited the circulation of his
books, blaming them for inciting hatred against Spaniards. More immediately, Garcilaso’s
work and life evoke pity. He had envisioned a Holy Inca Empire, based on the marriage of
conquerors and Inca noblemen, governed by a Christian mestizo group, who would
rule Inca people according to Inca and Spanish laws. But he was painfully aware of
European prejudices towards Indians and of the controversy surrounding Spanish rule.
He cited his knowledge of both sides as evidence that he would make a good colonial
official—an idea that would have disturbed Guaman Poma—hoping to return some day
to Peru as a corregidor. However, that day never came because he died in 1616 and was
buried in the cathedral of Córdoba, inside the old mesquita.

The limits of negotiation in North America

As Guaman Poma and Garcilaso brought their writings to a close in 1614, an English
captain sold as many as thirty Algonquian-speaking slaves in the port of Malaga, Spain.
One by the name of Squanto returned to his homeland, by way of London. He had completed at least two round trips to England, with a brief stay in Spain, by the time the Mayflower reached his village in 1620. The population of the area had then been decimated by a recent epidemic and the village was deserted. Massasoit, the Pokanoket sachem, relied on Squanto to negotiate a mutual protection plan with the Plymouth colony’s Pilgrims against his enemies, the Narragansett. Squanto lived with the English and taught them how to plant corn seed.¹⁶

Meanwhile, the daughter of a powerful Algonquian leader to the south married an Englishman and travelled to England in 1616. Pocahontas and her husband, a tobacco planter in Virginia, their child, and at least ten other people from her village made the voyage. During her nine-month sojourn, Lady Rebecca Rolfe, as Pocahontas was known in England, met the king and queen and numerous high-ranking dignitaries. The entourage was financed in part by the Virginia Company, which sought to advertise its successful transatlantic ventures. To the English she represented the ideal outcome of Anglo-Indian relations, a Protestant Christian Indian princess who spoke English and dressed like a lady. But she fell ill and died on the return voyage in 1617, at Gravesend, on the bank of the Thames (Figure 15.3).¹⁷

These two transatlantic encounters signalled the rise of another imperial power in the Americas. The English presence at Jamestown in 1607 posed a military threat, but also offered tempting commercial and strategic opportunities for Powhatan, whose authority extended inland from the Chesapeake Bay over a large territory that included at least 10,000 people. The English traded manufactured goods for food in order to survive, while Powhatan hoped to incorporate them into his confederation and enlist them against his enemies. After a difficult start in which the settlers survived only with the assistance of indigenous people, they identified the commercial potential of tobacco that ensured the colony’s success and encouraged continued immigration. The widespread cultivation of tobacco spurred a demand for land and labour among the English, which led to conflict in 1622, when the settlers expanded inland from the coast. The use of firearms and metal weapons and European practices of warfare transformed the violent nature of combat in this period. In 1646 Powhatan’s brother and successor was captured and killed, leading to a treaty which recognized them as vassals of the monarch and hence subject to numerous English laws and demands. Land was the colonists’ principal demand. In 1676, renegade colonists conducted raids on indigenous settlements, seizing lands and slaves and convincing colonial authorities to recognize the gains of ‘Bacon’s Rebellion’. Another treaty in 1677 created reservations for nearby indigenous groups, required them to provide military support against unfriendly Indians, and regulated their trade activity.¹⁸

Further north in Plymouth, Puritans arrived after a full century of occasional contact between English explorers and fishermen with indigenous coastal groups that had distributed material goods and spread disease throughout the coastal hinterland. As in Virginia, most English settlers in New England were not as interested in trading with the Indians or converting them to Christianity as they were in acquiring more land by whatever means necessary, as more immigrant families arrived after 1630. The Pequots of eastern Connecticut suffered the most sensational loss of land and lives when they

¹⁸ Helen Rountree, Pocahontas’ People: The Powhatan Indians of Virginia Through Four Centuries (Norman, OK, 1990), 62–127.
resisted English expansion but failed to enlist the support of other indigenous groups. Combined forces from the Massachusetts Bay and Connecticut colonies, aided by Narragansett and Mohegan contingents, slaughtered an entire Pequot village by Mystic River in a pre-dawn surprise attack, killing all but the few who escaped. The rapid demise of this group was documented by a treaty of 1638, which divided all remaining captives among the victors and declared the Pequot ‘nation’ dissolved. 19

By the second half of the seventeenth century, most indigenous groups in New England were reeling from the rapid expansion of the settler colonists, and had learned that signing treaties with them entailed some form of subjugation to their political designs. When the Wampanoag sachem, Metacom, the son of Massasoit, was forced to disband and submit to Plymouth’s government, he abandoned his father’s strategy of negotiating with the Puritans. In 1675, he recruited Narragansett, Nipmuck, and others to fight the English settlers and their allies, the Mohawks, in a conflict known as King Philip’s War. He was killed the following year, and many of his followers and other victims of the war took flight or were sold as slaves in the Caribbean. In the aftermath of the war ten ‘praying towns’, communities that were subject to English law and Calvinism, were disbanded, leaving only four remaining. Separate from Indian and Puritan settlements, the towns were part of a strategy to resettle Indians, confining them to small towns with restricted agricultural holdings, while Puritan settlers moved on to their former lands. One of these praying towns was Natick, founded in 1651 about 30 kilometres west of Boston. Continued epidemics, competition for land and fisheries, demands for military service, debt, and the division and sale of lands to English buyers led to the eventual dispossession and dispersal of indigenous people from Natick by the end of the eighteenth century. 20

The English were not the only or even the first European power competing for resources in North America. Cartier’s expeditions along the St Lawrence River had initiated direct contact between French and indigenous peoples as early as the 1530s. French traders established prosperous fur-trading bases by the early seventeenth century; Champlain founded Quebec City, the capital of New France, in 1608. Algonquian-speakers traded for manufactured goods and sought to enlist Champlain’s men in their ongoing conflict with Iroquois to the south. At the same time, the five Iroquois nations—Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca—developed their own fur trade with the Dutch along the Hudson River, from whom they acquired firearms and metal tools. The Dutch settled in New Amsterdam, on Manhattan Island, and travelled up the Hudson River to found Fort Orange, a fur-trading centre near Mohican settlements. The Iroquois, especially the Mohawks, supplied the Dutch with thousands of pelts a year in return for firearms, iron goods, cloth, and alcohol. Through the Dutch, the Mohawk supplied other groups with wampum, strings of bright white and deep purple shells collected along the coastline that were prized for their exchange and prestige value.

Despite competition from the Iroquois and the Dutch, the French maintained a brisk fur trade by extending further into the interior of the continent and developing ties with the Huron, who lived around Georgian Bay and obtained pelts through trapping and trade with groups to the west. Smaller in number and eager to acquire raw materials, the French depended on maintaining good relations with their trade partners. From the 1620s onwards, Hurons paddled their canoes to Montreal to exchange pelts for copper pots, metal axes and knives, clothes, alcohol, and guns. Beginning in the 1640s, however, the Iroquois began to intercept Huron trading expeditions and harassed their settlements, dispersing them and adopting captives until they had undermined the group’s influence in the Great Lakes region. In response, the French became more aggressive in fighting the Iroquois and their European allies, first the Dutch and then the English, who captured Fort Orange in 1664 and renamed it Albany. More than 1,000 French troops destroyed three Mohawk villages in 1666, forcing the five nations to negotiate a peace in Quebec. From the 1680s on, the English and French fought bitterly for control of the region. The French sent more than 2,000 troops against the Seneca in 1687; the Iroquois retaliated by attacking French settlements along the St Lawrence River. 21

Continuous warfare, disease, and European alcohol had ravaged the indigenous population by the end of the seventeenth century, including the powerful Iroquois nations. In response, in 1701, the Iroquois signed separate treaties with New France in Montreal and New York in Albany, playing one against the other in the hope of peace and protection. This strategy worked as long as neither imperial power gained the upper hand, and Anglophile or Francophile factions within the complex councils of the Iroquois confederacy did not succeed in overrunning the neutralists. Peace and neutrality were fragile and tenuous because the French and English were not at peace. 22

Despite the separate treaties, Britain and France continued to solicit the support of the Iroquois against their enemies. To pursue promises made in 1701, a Mohawk and Mahican delegation travelled to London in 1710. Queen Anne personally received the ‘four Indian kings’, as they were called by the English, lavished gifts on them, and arranged to meet their expenses. In reality, the four delegates had been recruited by English colonists who advocated an invasion of French Canada, and who hoped to use their entourage to convince the queen that they had the support of the Iroquois confederacy. However, the confederacy council chose not to identify too closely with the British or the French, and continued to pursue a policy of neutrality. None of the so-called kings was a member of this council; all were young Anglophiles, only one

19 Salisbury, Manitou and Providence, 203–25.
the British recognized the independence of the former colonies in 1783, they ceded all land south of the Great Lakes to the United States and abandoned their old friends, the Iroquois, leaving them exposed to settlers who coveted their lands. Many were forced onto reservations or fled into Canada. By this time, Anglo-American leaders set their sights on acquiring more land for an expanding population and pushed native peoples away from the Atlantic.26

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The three sections of this chapter outline some of the pragmatic strategies of indigenous groups and individuals who confronted changes in the Atlantic world, exemplified by the transatlantic voyages discussed in sections one and three. Unfortunately for us, none of the delegations from North or South America in this period left any written record of its experiences. We are left to imagine what they thought of the other side, or resort to the impressions of Europeans who wrote about their visits. The indigenous and mestizo authors discussed in the first two sections were among the few from their world to set down their words for future generations. Their texts represent rare, insightful commentaries from the two major viceregalies of Spanish America, sites of intense inter-ethnic interaction, within a century after their incorporation into the Atlantic world. Many of these writings from Mexico and Peru reveal a tension between hope and despair, expectation and frustration, as possibilities for cooperation, trade, and alliance between colonists and indigenous gave way in many places to competition for resources and profit. The long-term costs of this competition to Native Americans were incalculable. Settlers and traders brought institutions and mentalities across the Atlantic that transformed the new world in the image of the old. European kingdoms, companies, and nation-states fought to control trade routes, resources, and populations in the Americas, engaging or enlisting native groups in the process, even when leaders of those groups sought to remain neutral. Many indigenous peoples were drawn into a maelstrom of violence, fighting other Indians as much as Europeans. In contrast to the global scale of imperial ambitions, the vast majority of Native Americans struggled to protect the livelihood of their local communities. Most indigenous views of the Atlantic world were shaped and bound by local perspectives. Delegations that crossed the ocean represented their specific interests and did not pretend to speak on behalf of other native groups or, in the case of Mexico, even nearby communities. They hoped to distinguish themselves and their local interests from other so-called, Indians with whom they had little or no affiliation. For the same reason, indigenous writers rarely referred to themselves as 'Indians', a misnomer applied by Europeans to all native peoples of the 'Indies', with its juridical implications and pejorative connotations.

24 Vaughan, Transatlantic Encounters, 137–64.
The consequences of some changes are as difficult to imagine as they are to document. How are we to assess the impact of epidemic diseases on thousands of native societies and cultures, the periodic plagues that decimated approximately nine-tenths of indigenous populations over the course of two centuries? Perhaps the most startling fact is that the total population of the Americas did not reach its pre-contact level again until the nineteenth century, despite the transatlantic migration of millions of Europeans and Africans before 1800. And yet ‘Indians’ still outnumbered other racial groups in many parts of the Americas by the end of the long colonial periods, while contributing untold numbers to the creation of multi-racial societies throughout the hemisphere. These facts attest to the powerful, enduring presence of indigenous peoples in the Atlantic world.

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CHAPTER 16

AFRICA, SLAVERY, AND THE SLAVE TRADE, MID-SEVENTEENTH TO MID-EIGHTEENTH CENTURIES

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Which of the major components of the Atlantic world—the Americas, Africa, and Europe—was most immediately affected by the integration of the Old and New Worlds that Columbus contact triggered? On epidemiological grounds alone the Americas would be the choice of most scholars, with Europe, at least prior to the eighteenth century, the least affected. In terms of dramatic economic, demographic, and social consequences of the early stages of Atlantic integration, Africa lies somewhere between the two. Yet if we shift the focus to changes in the nature and size of connections between the continents as opposed to changes within them, the most striking developments between the 1640s and the 1770s relate to Africa, not Europe or the Americas.

The growth of those connections was very slow. By the time of the First World War about 70 million people had crossed the Atlantic to the Americas since 1492. But only about half a million of these, or less than 1 per cent, had made the voyage in the first century and a half. About half the early migrants were captives from Africa, the other half, largely free or indentured, were from Europe. The most recent estimate of the number of captives carried off across the Atlantic in the 1640s is 12,000 a year, when the population of sub-Saharan Africa was certainly several million. Moreover, the only products traded across the Atlantic after 150 years of the Iberian Americas were precious metals and sugar—the latter still a high-value luxury rather than a consumer...