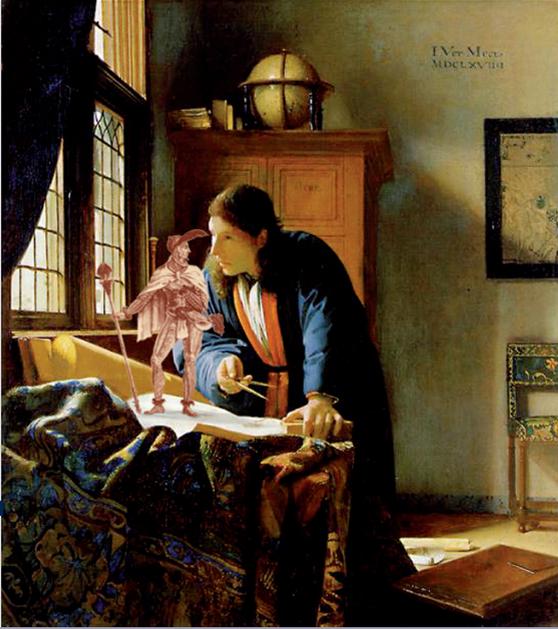


CULTURAL ENCOUNTERS AND THE  
DISCOURSES OF SCHOLARSHIP



Andreas Beer, Gesa Mackenthun (eds.)

# Fugitive Knowledge

The Loss and Preservation of  
Knowledge in Cultural Contact Zones

WAXMANN

# Cultural Encounters and the Discourses of Scholarship

Edited by  
Gesa Mackenthun

Volume 8

This series seeks to stimulate fresh and critical perspectives on the interpretation of phenomena of cultural contact in both transhistorical and transdisciplinary ways. It brings together the research results of the graduate school “Cultural Encounters and the Discourses of Scholarship,” located at Rostock University and sponsored by the German Research Foundation (DFG). One of the concerns of the volumes published in this series is to test and explore contemporary theoretical concepts and analytical tools used for the study of intercultural relations, from antiquity to the present. Aware of significant recent changes in the ways in which other cultures are represented, and “culture” as such is defined and described, the series seeks to promote a dialogical over a monological theoretical paradigm and advocates approaches to the study of cultural alterity that are conscious of the representational character of our knowledge about other cultures. It wants to strengthen a recognition of the interdependencies between the production of knowledge about unfamiliar peoples and societies in various scholarly disciplines and ideologies of nationality, empire, and globalization. In critically investigating the analytical potential of postcolonial key terms such as “hybridity,” “contact zone,” and “transculturation,” the series contributes to international scholarly debates in various fields oriented at finding more balanced and reciprocal ways of studying and writing about intercultural relations both past and present.

Andreas Beer  
Gesa Mackenthun (eds.)

# Fugitive Knowledge

The Loss and Preservation of  
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# Introduction

GESA MACKENTHUN AND ANDREAS BEER

At a time when our increasingly digitalized world overflows with an abundance of information and storage technologies, we sometimes have to be reminded that knowledge also gets ‘lost’. Especially in situations of cultural encounters past and present, we have to ask which knowledges are not easily appropriated by or translated from one cultural sphere into another, remain at the margins of cross-cultural exchanges because of a seeming lack of significance, or are hidden away in barely accessible archives. While most colonial regimes have been, according to Ann Laura Stoler, “knowledge-acquiring machines” (Stoler, “Tense and Tender Ties” 55), there can be little doubt that the knowledge they admitted into their epistemic universe was far from universal: some items of knowledge were suppressed because they challenged the status quo, and others simply did not fall into the rather utilitarian categories required by colonial regimes geared toward an ever more efficient development of colonial practices (for a case study of the British Empire, see Drayton). This has led (and continues to lead) to the loss of a massive archive of knowledge, which various representatives of ‘postcolonial’ historiography are now in the process of retrieving. In order to emphasize the dynamic character of the loss of knowledge during cultural – especially colonial and imperial – encounters, we have chosen the term ‘fugitive knowledge’. Fugitive knowledge is not gone but absent, meaning that it is still somewhere. This volume brings together a number of case studies that demonstrate how knowledge becomes transient, evanescent, and ephemeral in cultural contact zones.<sup>1</sup>

But ‘fugitive’ also conjures up the term ‘fugue’. Edward Said suggested one of its key elements, the counterpoint, as a metaphor for an awareness of the entanglement of “simultaneous dimensions” within the modern imperial formation (“Reflections on Exile” 186). While the musical counterpoint is too strictly ordered to offer itself as a description of the fuzzy and often unpredictable realities of cultural encounters and their texts, those encounters are adequately described as being polyphonic: a contrapuntal fugue if you will. They consist of a contest between different voices, even though historiography has often canonized only one of them – the voice of the ‘victor’. The chapters here address such cases of intercultural polyphony and epistemic contest, and they seek ways to trace the dynamics through which knowledge becomes fugitive and is exiled from the historical archive.

1 These are a few synonyms for ‘fugitive’ from the OED.

The fugitivity of knowledge is also inherent in our attempts at definition. Our concept's referent may change with the different contributions due to the diversity of fields and critical approaches represented here. This semantic flexibility of the concept allows it to be applied in synchronic as well as diachronic perspectives, to critical readings 'against the grain' of some archives as well as to other archives hitherto unacknowledged documents. It is up to the reader to decide about the productiveness of the fuzzy term in describing the fuzziness of cultural encounters.

For a better understanding of what we mean by the fugitivity of knowledge, let us look at an example. In 1610, the British colony at Jamestown was experiencing increasingly difficult relations with the local Pamunkey tribe, on which it very much relied for survival. In the middle of a series of hostile acts, which ultimately led to the abduction of Pocahontas, representatives of the two cultural groups also enjoyed peaceful moments. This was doubtless because both sides felt the need to get along with one another, a policy that had made them exchange several young men to live with the other group, learn its language and customs, and act as translators and mediators.

In *The Historie of Travell into Virginia Britania*, the earliest 'history' of Jamestown colony – that is, the first chronological narrative of the events – the secretary of the colony, William Strachey, reports on a visit paid to his ship around Christmas time by Iopassus, a brother of Powhatan and uncle of Pocahontas. Iopassus expresses his curiosity about one of the men reading from the Bible. Strachey asks young Henry Spelman, one of the English go-betweens, to explain an image of the creation of the world to the Indian in his own language, which Iopassus seems to appreciate.

But the classic colonial scene of religious instruction is then inverted by Iopassus, who offers to tell the English listeners his own people's creation story. This is followed by a long passage quoting Iopassus's narrative about a great hare, his marvelous creation of animals and humans, and his battles against fearsome cannibal spirits.<sup>2</sup> Strachey considers this a pretty garbled tale – he begs the boy to ask Iopassus to "proceed [...] in some order" and to make the story "hang together the better." But his intervention is frustrated by Spelman, who tells Strachey that he is "vnwilling to question him [Iopassus] so many things lest he should offend him." Thus the old man continues his story of creation, some of which must certainly have been blasphemous to Christian ears. Yet, the British now want to know more: the captain of the ship where the interview takes place asks the boy to ask Iopassus about the Indians' beliefs about life after death, upon which Iopassus renders a beautiful description of his tribe's notions of life in the otherworld. Here the people who have died

2 The quote cannot be rendered in full here but is not lost to modern scholarship. See Mackenthun, *Metaphors* 254–55.

run in this pleasant path to the rying of the Sun, where they fynd their forefathers living in great pleasure in a goodly field, where they doe nothing but daunce and sing, and feed on delicious fructs with that great Hare, who is their great god, and when they haue lived there, vntill they be starke old men, they saie they dye there likewise by turnes and come into the world againe. (Strachey 102–3)

Having presented the lengthy quotation of the Indian’s speech, Strachey reasserts an ethnographic-colonial position: “Concerning further of the religion, we haue not yet learned, not indeed shall we ever knowe all the Certaynty either of these their *vnhallowed mysteryes* or of their further orders and pollicyes vntill we can make surprize of some of their Quiyoughquissocks” (103; emphasis added). The “Quiyoughquissocks” are Pamunkey spiritual men – members of the intellectual elite whom the colonists quickly identified as their major antagonists. The scene of intercultural exchange about religious ideas ends at this point, and it remains an exception in Strachey’s text, whose main purpose is to demonize the Indian leaders and accuse them of such barbarous deeds as cannibalism and infanticide.

Strachey’s *Historie* was not published until 1849,<sup>3</sup> which means that the knowledge about Pamunkey religious views that it contains never entered intellectual circulation in colonial British America. The elements of Iopassus’s story have since been corroborated by other European colonial sources containing similar material from other tribes of the Algonquian language group (see Mackenthun, “Unhallowed Mysteries”). In his capacity as the colony’s secretary, it was Strachey’s duty to document the events that occurred there. Due to the presence of Spelman who, as his response to Strachey shows, was familiar with the language and customs of the Pamunkey, the text of Strachey’s otherwise hostile account seems to possess a large measure of authenticity. Yet, this unique early document of Algonquian spirituality remained largely unknown and unrecognized by scholarship, even after its publication. Apart from its physical unavailability (three manuscripts slumbered, one each, in the British Museum, the Bodleian Library at Oxford, and at Princeton University – Wright/Freund xvii), Strachey himself identifies possible reasons for this neglect: the story Iopassus tells was to Strachey largely incomprehensible, incoherent, and “unhallowed,” i.e., ‘unholy’: not in keeping with the Christian belief system.

Although disqualified as a “pretty fabulous tale,” the story from a different culture was able to survive. Though certainly distorted through translation and transcription, the words of Iopassus do seem to constitute a case of relatively faithful and disinterested recording. This may be explained by the widely observed fact that sixteenth-century European travelers to America were not impelled exclusively by commercial desires but also by intellectual curiosity

3 This leaves Captain John Smith’s *Generall Historie of Virginia* (1625) as the first printed history of that English colony.

about other cultures. In Strachey's text, these two motivations make strange bed-fellows, as they do in texts by Bernardino de Sahagún, Thomas Hariot, and many others.

We want to use this episode as a prototype of what we mean by the fugitivity of knowledge in cultural contact situations. By virtue of so often being confined to the margins of our epistemic system, this fugitivity shares certain characteristics with "subjugated knowledges" evoked by Michel Foucault and retrieved by the history from below (Foucault 81, 83; Hock and Mackenthun 8–16; Sharpe). The concept of fugitive knowledge, however, differs from what Foucault has called the "savoir des gens" in that it evokes less the idea of a ready-made counter-hegemonic archive waiting to be uncovered but the processual nature of epistemic procedures, the fact that knowledge is being made, and consequently also unmade. Knowledge that is fugitive is not so much lost as relegated to the edges of our attention, languishing in a state of dismissal, and for a variety of reasons readily ignored or disarticulated.

Our understanding of fugitive knowledge – as the asymmetrical and selective preservation of knowledge in cultural contact zones – resembles what Sebastian Jobs calls "uncertain knowledge" – rumor, gossip, denunciation, and the like – in that it often occurs in situations of epistemic or political crisis (Jobs 4, referring to Jean-Noël Kapferer). Jobs has in mind the uncertainties created by racially legitimated inequalities in slave societies. Indeed, as Julius Scott, Marcus Rediker, and Peter Linebaugh have indicated, unofficial, often orally transmitted, and potentially subversive knowledge proliferates in situations of war, conflict, or systemic social inequality. They point, for instance, to the existence of a widespread communication network among African American seamen through which information about slave rebellions and the revolution in Saint-Domingue (1791–1804) was transmitted in the late eighteenth century.

Ann Stoler draws a connection between the kind of "epistemological uncertainty" expressed in the preceding examples and the textual evidence found in colonial archives. Uncertainty, she suggests, can be deduced from the disparate forms in which knowledge is found to be "unwritten." She distinguishes between "what was unwritten because it could go without saying and 'everybody knew it', what was unwritten because it could not yet be articulated, and what was unwritten because it could not be said" (*Along the Archival Grain* 3). Regarding archives in dynamic terms – as "archiving-in-progress" – Stoler places particular emphasis on the rhetorical composition of archival records – their "prose style," their "repetitive refrain," their "acts of persuasion," their "genres of documentation," and so on (20). In her contribution to this collection, Gunlög Fur makes similar points about the significance of the rhetorical constructedness of evidence. Especially in cultural and colonial contact zones, epistemic lacunae occur not only because libraries and archives fall victim to natural or human disasters (earthquakes, fires, wars) but they are also the result of discursive processes of silencing. Following Stoler (and Foucault, and Pierre Macherey), we can say

that the silences of the colonial archive are actually constitutive of that which is being said (Foucault, *Order of Things* 129–32; Macherey 79–80).<sup>4</sup>

The Strachey-Iopassus exchange confirms Stoler's and Jobs's claims that knowledge is not a static but rather a dynamic process – though captured in different states in different media – and the result of social, communicative interactions and negotiations. This case also shows that in intercultural contexts such communication is often impeded by a lack of understanding and ideologically determined prejudices.

While the epistemological void or ambiguity in our current knowledge systems has been a point of interest since the first volume in this book series (Mac-kenthun and Juterczenka 10), the papers collected here take a closer look at the mechanisms of preservation and loss of knowledge during cultural encounters. These mechanisms are both material and intellectual, and are arguably interrelated. Materially, the preservation of knowledge from earlier historical periods depends on the durability of the media in which it is stored, as well as the archives where it is kept, and the access admitted to these archives. Furthermore, problems of translation arise when epistemic systems are recontextualized across time periods, social strata, or language groups. Though the written or printed text is not the most permanent medium (compared to, say, petroglyphs or other inscriptions chiseled in stone), texts prevailed as the privileged communication medium in Western culture. Yet their preservation in libraries and archives can be less secure than one might hope. Whenever we learn of the accidental or wanton destruction of a library of manuscripts and rare prints not yet digitalized – whether in Weimar, Cologne, or Timbuktu – most of us will experience this as a great loss to our cultures and to humanity as a whole.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, much knowledge, though preserved in archives, is excluded from general circulation because it has remained unprinted and unreproduced. Knowledge excluded from mass reproduction is at best dormant if not dead knowledge. The story of Iopassus remained unknown and unshared during colonial times because Strachey's text was not printed until 1849, and even then it was never produced in larger print runs.

4 The idea can be traced back to Friedrich Nietzsche's famous insight in *Morgenröthe* (*Dawn of Day*, 1881; section 523), where he poses the "insidious question": "When we are confronted with any manifestation which someone has permitted us to see, we may ask: What is it meant to conceal? What is it meant to draw our attention from? What prejudice does it seek to raise? And again, how far does the subtlety of the dissimulation go? And in what respect is the man mistaken?" (Engl. translation after Project Gutenberg).

5 This is not to say that digitization is the solution to all problems of textual preservation. Missing or faulty contextualization, limited access, and the fragile, often privatized infrastructure of digital archives call for a critical investigation of the digital form, its potential, its vulnerabilities, as well as solutions for addressing these issues.

Furthermore, knowledge might be linked quite intimately to human bodies,<sup>6</sup> as Stephan Kloos reveals in an essay in this volume: Certain (elite) agents are often the physical carriers of unwritten knowledges, the bearers of oral wisdom or important historical narratives. Persecuting, incarcerating, or killing such agents constitutes a direct threat to the proliferation of knowledge.

Politics (on the macro- but also on the microlevel) is thus another obvious dimension that plays into the fugitivity and loss of knowledge in situations of cultural contact. A seemingly insignificant, yet perhaps paradigmatic example of this type of knowledge suppression is discussed – among others – by Ricardo Salvatore in this volume, when he shows that it was not Hiram Bingham who ‘discovered’ the site of Machu Picchu as the local population had known about it for years. Visiting the famous Inca ruins today, one can immediately appreciate the contestedness of the claim to primacy when observing no less than four memorial plaques hanging side-by-side at the entrance of the ruins: one for the “discoverer” Bingham (from 1961), two for the “scientific discovery” made by Bingham (from 1948 and 1986, respectively), and one paying homage to Melchor Arteaga Richarte and his son, who had used Machu Picchu as farming grounds and had led Bingham to it upon his enquiry in 1911 (this plaque dates from 1999). The fugitivity of this piece of crucial knowledge becomes evident when the interested tourist strolls through the archaeological site and eavesdrops on several guided tours: a majority of guides still attribute full recognition for the ‘discovery’ to Bingham. In a region whose economy counts almost totally on Machu Picchu visitors, local guides and Peruvian businesses (such as PeruRail, which offers train service to Machu Picchu in a 1920s-styled train named after Bingham) seem to have opted to uphold the imperial dream of the foreign discovery of this archaeological treasure for a paying audience not yet ready to accept non-Western agency in the endeavor.

The knowledge about the long-standing local awareness of Machu Picchu’s existence is not subjugated knowledge: in fact, as mentioned, it is readily apparent at the site’s entrance. Nevertheless, to ‘discover’ it, one has to turn one’s eyes away from the organized tours, and pay attention to the margins of the site’s spectacle: it is fugitive knowledge.

While in some cases religious institutions like the Vatican or colonial governments prevented ideologically ‘blurred’ documents from being printed (as in the case of Sahagún or Poma de Ayala), in other instances knowledge was and is suppressed in order to uphold relatively local power structures. On a purely material basis, of course nothing ever gets lost. In her book *Dust*, Carolyn Steedman draws philosophical conclusions from some nineteenth-century writers’ obsessions with the phenomenon of dust as a waste product of the industrializing world. Proposing a “philosophy of dust,” she argues that, contrary to waste, dust is part of

6 The entanglements between human bodies and the generation of knowledge in situations of cultural contact were investigated in volume three of this series, *Embodiments of Cultural Encounters*.

an eternal circularity, of “nothing ever, ever going away” (166). This reminder of the transience of all things (in the sense of the medieval-early modern concept of *vanitas*), however, refers to an existence beyond the world of meaning and, therefore, knowledge. Dust, the ultimate destination of all worldly things, the terminus of fugitivity, is a subsemantic category. As dust, the artifact has ceased to signify; it can no longer be used as evidence for anything.

Against the backdrop of final dissolution (not into nothingness but into meaninglessness), our examples deal with instances of material circulation in cultural contact zones that are still epistemically significant. They also establish that the materiality of knowledge cannot be separated from its intellectual and ideological aspects. The essays assembled here predominantly analyze transactions of knowledge in colonial contexts, i.e., in situations of asymmetrical cultural contact. Political hegemony is achieved by direct control of territories, human bodies, and the social interaction between human beings, but also, significantly, by control of human minds. Early modern colonizers were well aware of this fact and made certain that indigenous epistemological traditions were destroyed, denounced, and interrupted. The destruction of Mexican codices by Franciscan friars, documented by the first-generation mestizo Diego Muñoz Camargo in his *Descripción de Tlaxcala* of 1585, illustrates this process (Fig. 1).

The image can be seen to visualize a competition for epistemic hegemony, with the deities and ancient rulers angered and potentially liberated from textual control by the friars’ firebrands. They seem to come to life in the flames of the auto-da-fé, as so many demons liberated by the sorcerer’s apprentice. Camargo’s drawing also reminds us of the strange tendency of colonial powers to document their acts of devastation, thereby leaving a trace of the former existence of the knowledges they have gone to such lengths to repress. From a diachronic perspective, such traces – such knowledge of the absence of knowledge – can often initiate the critical reexamination of established historiographies, myths, and narratives.

The image shows that the friars were very conscious of the fact that these codices were indeed texts – thus contradicting later assertions that textual media were completely unknown to and not produced by indigenous Americans. This contention was later expanded into the claim, made under the influence of Hegel’s nexus between textuality and historicity, that Native Americans, and other ‘primitive’ peoples, had no history because they had no texts. Until quite recently, Western scholarship was almost slavishly dependent on the existence of (printed) texts as the only medium considered to be reliable. While visual media, material artifacts, architectural forms, archaeological findings, and spatial structures are now beginning to enjoy a certain degree of respectability in historical scholarship (for a recent assessment, see Windus and Crailsheim), the same cannot be said about indigenous oral traditions (but see Cruikshank; Finnegan). These sources are only beginning to receive the attention they deserve in historical and, interest-



Fig. 1: Destruction of Mexican Codices. Diego Muñoz Camargo, *Descripción de la ciudad y provincia de Tlaxcala* (c. 1585). Sp Coll MS Hunter 242 (U.3.15) folio 242r (Glasgow University).

ingly, juridical contexts (Brown; Echo-Hawk; Southwest Aboriginal Land and Sea Council).

In addition to the destruction of non-European archives and the denial of non-European forms of communication, another reason for the fugitivity of knowledge is that the contents of these communications were regarded as obscure and ‘incoherent’. As Strachey’s example establishes, knowledge was frequently denounced because it was considered disorderly and “unhallowed” – not conforming to European notions of order, intelligibility, and intellectual tradition. The medieval stories about the Viking voyages to Newfoundland were held to be mere myths and fairy tales; only the archaeological discoveries at l’Anse aux Meadows in 1960 proved them to be, at least in part, trustworthy. In this volume, Neil Safier provides another example of how a colonial text considered too fabulous to be taken seriously now has to be reassessed because its contents is corroborated by archaeological evidence. Thus, one scientific practice that flowered in the soil of impe-

rialism reinforces the knowledge formerly repressed due to ideological assumptions about the lacking cultural competence of ancient and non-European people.

The preservation and transmission of knowledge in cultural contact zones, then, is more often than not vastly selective; different or unfamiliar knowledge was and still is as a matter of course disarticulated by being belittled, demonized, and pathologized. Walter Mignolo has suggested the useful term “coloniality of knowledge” to capture this phenomenon. Referring to a 1989 essay in which Aníbal Quijano first outlined the concept, Mignolo (and other former members of the Latin American Subaltern Studies Group collective) use the term “coloniality”<sup>7</sup> to describe the ongoing colonial access to, distribution, production, and reproduction of knowledge, an often subtle process that ultimately excludes and occludes alternative epistemes (see Mignolo, *Local Histories*, and Mignolo, *Darker Side*). While other scholars had already diagnosed such a “Euro-Americacentrism” (Lenz), Mignolo and other decolonial authors go a step further by urging us (meaning, first and foremost, academics) to ‘decolonize’ our own epistemic systems, our own scientific methods, and our own understanding of our profession, which is, after all, the generation of knowledge.

Although most contributions in this collection examine cases of epistemic fugitivity in colonial and cultural contact zones, the Viking example shows that similar processes also took place ‘within’ cultures, and that European cultures were and are less homogeneous than many of us were taught through nationalist historiographies.<sup>8</sup> The marginalization of knowledge of the Viking voyages in the sagas of Christianized chroniclers is in some ways comparable to the suppression of indigenous knowledge in America. In both cases, epistemic effacement can be seen as a response to epistemic transformation and crisis.

‘Crisis’ is a concept that can be applied to most cross-cultural meetings, especially those of first contact, war, or hostile relations. Fugitive knowledge frequently occurs at just such times of social exigency and transition. With the encounter between Europeans and indigenous cultures, the societies of the latter faced severe social, political, and epistemological crises that encompassed the slow and gradual transition into Western-style modernity. Yet, as Sanjay Seth demonstrates in this volume, as a modern sociological category ‘crisis’ also runs the risk of being misapplied to the psychological conditions of colonized subjects. What modern sociology and psychology regard as ‘identity’ or ‘religious crisis’

7 Mignolo had previously introduced other critical terms into the matrix of a postcolonial vocabulary, which are supposed to derail our common train of thought by making us think outside of established epistemic concepts. These include “border gnosis,” “post-Occidentalism,” and “colonial difference” (all from *Local Histories/Global Designs*, *passim*).

8 We write ‘European’ often as a conventional shorthand for ‘Western, imperial powers’. However, the essay by Liina Lukas in this volume reminds us that we need to differentiate between European regions and social groups, which had varying degrees of involvement in the colonial formation. Disarticulated knowledges slumber in the midst of Europe. Dipesh Chakrabarty’s call to “provincialize Europe” is still a programmatic goal rather than a completed state of academic research.

may not be experienced as such by non-European people because their concepts of identity and religion may differ from those of Western science. Members of cultures that entertain a plural and non-dualistic sense of self and spiritual choice may be less shaken by false alternatives if they retain a certain amount of ideological leeway to build their own versions of self and spirituality. In cases of calculated and forced deculturation, however, this latitude does not exist. In Indian mission schools in the US and Canada in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, for example, indigenous identities were systematically erased and the passing on of knowledge thus disrupted.

Until lately, scholarship has been reluctant to include the hybrid products of such conflictive epistemological confrontations. As a result of empirical studies and conceptual proposals such as Richard White's "middle ground" (1991) and Mary Louise Pratt's "contact zone" (1992), which suggested more nuanced – and more complex – situations 'on the ground' of cultural confluences, an increasing number of scholars regard once more common forms of knowledge canonization as, at best, much too simplistic, and at worst itself part of the colonial project. To combat the persistent denial of the coevalness of non-European cultures (Fabian), a variety of attempts are now underway to empower knowledges that were heretofore effaced or marginalized. This volume is part of that effort.

Even so, in reconstructing the multidimensionality of historical knowledge, the archival situation is often disastrous. Having diagnosed the problem – the selective, fragmented, and asymmetrical preservation of epistemic structures – scholarship is in need of a cure. As Gunlög Fur points out in her chapter, the remedy first and foremost consists of developing more intricate methods of reading the documents of cultural encounters. Hegemonic sources can be read not only with but also against their grain. Peripheral information can be pulled to the center, fragments and "shards" can be pieced together to form a new picture of epistemological encounters.

These issues are not new. Writing twenty years ago on the scant documentation of the indigenous reality in the Amazon basin, Neil Whitehead complained about the "woefully insubstantial" status of modern scientific research, due to the tendency of modern scholars (especially "literary" and "historicist" ones) to concentrate on "either small episodes within texts, or a tiny selection of texts." Whitehead demanded that scholars pay more attention to the "mimetic elaboration" of the cultural encounter performed in these texts, and he insisted that it is necessary to acknowledge the existence of "symbolic convergences" between different cultures – the fact that cultural repertoires may share certain symbolic elements even if no direct influence can be affirmed (87–89). We can observe again and again how in the documents of cultural encounters mythical materials are productively, and for the reader hopelessly, mixed with seemingly accurate observations. For Whitehead (here referring to Sir Walter Raleigh's account of his voyage to Guiana in 1595), colonial texts are "flawed lenses"; nevertheless they do indeed "refract" something of the social reality of the encounter (88).

In other words, the documents of cultural and linguistic contacts always contain “partial truths” (Clifford) and produce “blurred genres” (Geertz). It requires competence in critical reading in order to analyze them. This includes a keen attention to seemingly superfluous, incoherent, and eccentric material. Readings that are adequate to the complexity of cultural contact situations require a combination of the insights to be gained from the perspectives of various disciplines, as well as the use of their analytical tools.

A more recent concern for many scholars has been a critical reassessment of the theoretical models we use in our daily work, most of which have grown out of the tradition of the Western European or US-American academy, reiterating its preoccupations and blind spots. The aforementioned Walter D. Mignolo and other adherents of the ‘decolonial option’ are deeply suspicious of what they see as colonial theories and thinkers, and attempt to replace them with supposedly indigenous concepts which, they argue, can be fruitful in efforts to unhinge the modern colonial world system. Often these ideas come from Latin America, but Mignolo has underlined that other world regions, like China, might also offer alternative epistemic concepts (Mignolo, *Dark Side* 321). This reCanonization, however, has drawn sharp critiques from feminist and postcolonial critics, who accuse decolonial thinkers such as Anibal Quijano, Catherine Walsh, and Arturo Escobar of using the disguise of indigeneity to cater to the tastes of a globalized, yet Western-based, white and male academic community immersed in postcolonial identity politics (see Rivera Cusicanqui). As these discussions demonstrate, it is a difficult and contested step from exposing epistemic gaps in our knowledge systems to finding ways to try to fill them. What has become increasingly clear is that any endeavor to repair the damaged cross-cultural archive can only be successful when it taps into the strengths of diverse disciplinary fields – when it actually attempts to bridge the chasms that were dug by the Western educational system – and moves toward a more holistic approach of knowledge acquisition. Education – whether “aesthetic” or more general – is the means for doing so (Spivak). This project of interdisciplinary ‘decolonization’ represents an enormous challenge for scholars who trained for years, or even decades, in their respective fields, as well as for institutions designed to uphold the barriers between these fields. And it is far from certain whether these attempts can overcome, even partially, the impairment resulting from the destruction and resultant loss of alternative epistemologies. Yet, to paraphrase a famous aphorism by the Mexican indigenous guerilla group EZLN, which serves as a crucial inspiration for many decolonial thinkers: Through constant questioning, we have to move forward.<sup>9</sup>

To take another small step in this direction, the present volume therefore brings together insights from various scholarly disciplines, including literary stud-

9 “Preguntando caminamos” is one of the mottos of the EZLN, featured prominently in many discussions on their policy-making, see e.g. Aguirre Rojas, Conant, Holloway, Huffschmid, Khasnabish, Zugman Delacioppa, and the edited volumes by Midnight Notes and REDaktion.

ies, history, and archaeology. All contributions approach their material (texts, images, collective memories, and social practices) from a number of theoretical and methodological angles. Because information can be ‘there’ without being ‘seen’ if the ideological and disciplinary lens of just one discipline is employed. A broadening of the vision can afford access to the fugitive knowledge that lies beyond.

## Chapter Summaries

The first section, *Contesting Imperial Knowledges and Colonial Myths*, begins with an essay in which *Gunlög Fur* provides an initial model of colonial knowledge’s selectivity. In “‘But in Itself, the Law is Only White’: Knowledge Claims and Universality in the History of Cultural Encounters,” she discusses various aspects of colonial knowledge contestation between different groups of Native Americans and colonial newcomers in North America and between Samis and Swedes in Northern Scandinavia. Drawing on examples of indigenous people and cultural go-betweens asserting their sovereignty against the power claims of colonial representatives, Fur uses these cases in order to raise methodological points about how to read these polyvocal texts which, being texts, are after all part of the colonial archive. Siding with historians like Michael Witgen, Fur insists on the necessity of reading colonial texts without ideological blinders and with an acute regard for seemingly irrelevant information and submerged meanings. She refers to the incompleteness of such “shards” of indigenous knowledge preserved in the colonial record, and she encourages us to include the seeming “margins” of these documents in our analysis because “[m]argins have the potential of subverting conventional narratives.” She also traces the process by which indigenous perspectives were sidelined – moved from center stage into ornamental vignettes – in the colonial iconography of Sweden. Such symbolic acts were disputed both by indigenous voices in colonial texts and by indigenous oral tradition, retrieved today by Sami and Native American scholars. And these articulations uphold a very different account of the process of cultural and territorial dispossession. With Johannes Fabian and Dipesh Chakrabarty, Fur contends that the practice of historiography is itself deeply involved in writing such voices out of the record. She couples this critique with an appeal to modern scholars to become methodologically adept at meeting the challenge of the colonial archive.

Taking a fresh look at the early modern myth of El Dorado, *Neil Saftier* in “Fugitive El Dorado: The Early History of an Amazonian Myth” contrasts two sets of evidence: first, early modern European travelogues of the Amazon River basin region, which Saftier reads against their ideological grain, and second, modern archaeological findings that testify to the fact that the Amazon, rather than having been the ‘pristine’ or ‘paradisical’ place of the colonial imagination, contains a large number of ancient and once cultivated anthropogenic landscapes.

Knowledge of this latter state makes hitherto neglected colonial narratives, such as Gaspar de Carvajal's mid-sixteenth-century travelogue *Descubrimiento del río de las Amazonas*, seem less 'fabulous' in their descriptions of indigenous agriculture, horticulture, and domestication of animals. Carvajal's narrative only became part of transatlantic knowledge circulation in 1894. It is itself a 'lost' text, and we are left to speculate about whether the inattention to which it was subjected was somehow related to the incongruousness of the information it contained.

Section two, *German Colonialisms: Texts, Territories, and Social Belonging*, consists of two essays dedicated to two German colonial territories, the Baltic and Southwest Africa. In "Who holds the Right to the Land? Narratives of Colonization in Baltic-German and Estonian Literatures," Liina Lukas investigates the interplay between history, historical novels, and efforts of nation building in the Baltic states from the thirteenth to the nineteenth century. Comparing Estonian and Latvian national epics written under the rule of the German-speaking elites, Lukas reminds us that even long before the age of the "invention of tradition" (to use Hobsbawm and Ranger's phrase) questions of territorial belonging played a pivotal role in the constitution of proto-nationalities: all the texts she interrogates are preoccupied with the question "to whom the land belongs" and, consequently, which bodies have a right to live on it. Historical novels – "fictions of nation building," as Nina Gerassi-Navarro has called them (*Pirate Novels*) – negotiate this question by depicting iconic events of the past from different perspectives throughout the centuries: the subordination of pagan Estonians and Livonians under German-speaking Catholic elites was narrated first as an act of *reconquista*, reincorporating heathen lands into a pan-European Catholic realm. With the first burgeoning of nationalism in the late eighteenth century, however, this narrative changed into one of subjugation, which lent itself to efforts of nation building in the long nineteenth century, finally privileging both Estonian and Livonian narratives over Baltic-German viewpoints. Lukas makes manifest how this trajectory links with narratives of nation building in both Western Europe and North America, and presses us to widen our postcolonial perspective to include regions like the Baltic. Lukas's case study underlines the interconnectedness between literary and socio-political agency, creating a hotbed in which historical knowledge is always questioned and 'national historiographies' decide which knowledges are privileged and which are sidelined – but never without contestation.

Shifting the view from the scene of German colonization of Eastern Baltic to that of Southwest Africa, Daniel Walther, in his essay "Double Liminalization: The Historiography of German Colonialism and Reading the Marginalized in Colonial Texts," queries German historiography's still marginal treatment of Germany's colonial history on that continent. Walther argues that for a long time the investigation of German colonialism suffered from a fixation on the overwhelming crime of the Holocaust, thus converting the colonial past into an artifact of fugitive knowledge: always on the brink of scientific and popular remembering, but never fully present. Only after the revolutions of 1989 and the fall of

the Berlin Wall could a new interest in Germany's colonial past emerge which, as Walther maintains, profited from the turn toward cultural studies and transnational perspectives in the humanities and history. A concurrence with the new research paradigm of the history of everyday life, however, carries the danger of losing sight of the peculiarities of colonial practices, thus once again relegating the still ephemeral research on Germany's colonialism to the sidelines. To counteract these tendencies, Walther urges a postcolonial rereading of texts produced within the colonial environment. His essay includes an exemplary discussion of two source texts that admit a glimpse into the machinations of imperial policy from a subaltern point of view, thereby confronting the perpetuation in German historiography of the exclusion and fugitivity of subaltern subjects in a process Walther calls a "double liminalization."

Section three addresses *Epistemic Transfers and Blockages between Asia and Europe*. The understanding of fugitive knowledge promoted in this volume also includes cases of epistemological misperception in colonial contact zones. *Sanjay Seth's* essay, "A Question of Moral Crisis," critically investigates claims made by both colonizers and some of the colonized that educated Indians experienced moral crisis and disarray as a result of their exposure to Western knowledge in the schools and universities established by the British rulers. This crisis was assumed to arise from an incompatibility between Christian and Hindu beliefs and values. Seth critiques this reduction of intercultural processes to religious categories, and in an intriguing reading of the sources he suggests that the 'crisis' is the product of Western proto-psychological reasoning rather than a matter of what actually happened for educated Indians. He evinces that Indians who underwent Western pedagogical training developed strategies that made it possible for them to straddle different moral codes and systems. Their lived relation to the real escapes the grasp of the Western concepts and categories that were used to explain their 'immoral' behavior. Seth consequently questions the adequacy of Western knowledge for explaining its own effects. More generally, he wonders about the status of the knowledge produced when the categories of modern Western thought are applied in order to apprehend and explicate a transitional society like colonial India.

The essay "(Im-)Potent Knowledges. Preserving 'Traditional' Tibetan Medicine Through Modern Science" by *Stephan Kloos*, on the other hand, suggests that what was once on the fringes of knowledge in one cultural field can become prominent in another. Emphasizing the importance of the material aspects of knowledge systems, Kloos shows how Tibetan doctors manage to safeguard their 'traditional' medical practices within the hostile environment of 'modern' science, while concurrently dealing with the forced exile of their medicine's practitioners from Tibetan territory. Through a transnational negotiation over quality control in the medical sector (which, en passant, problematizes what kinds of medicine are considered appropriate in Western societies), Tibetans artfully position their unique knowledge of plants, herbs, and natural ingredients within a current

Western desire for non-Western, ‘traditional’ medicine, thereby renegotiating not only the boundaries of what is commonly labeled ‘scientific knowledge’, but also attempting to sustain a Tibetan national identity deeply connected with that medical knowledge. While Tibetan medicine – once on the brink of oblivion due to the forced displacement of its practitioners – now enjoys a strong presence within a global, market-driven economy, this very development threatens what Tibetans regard as the practice’s essence: the careful collection of ingredients and the personal ethics of the doctors (*amchi*) that assure the medicine’s success. Within our capitalist mode of production and distribution, what is considered to be the Tibetan way of producing and administering herbal cures is increasingly becoming a fugitive source of knowledge, which in a way is akin to the earlier threat of physical extinction faced by the Tibetan exiles.

Section four, *Speculative Knowledge in Colonial America*, is dedicated to knowledge that was prevented from entering the scientific canon. In “The Morality of the Moon,” *R. A. Kashanipour* examines the interstices of a non-Western Enlightenment episteme with its colonial counterparts by rescuing from obscurity the works of Manuel de Rivas, a Spanish friar who at the end of the eighteenth century dared to critique colonial authorities on the Mexican peninsula of Yucatán. To this end, Rivas issued angry pamphlets in the Mayan language that detailed ecclesiastical misbehavior using metaphors originating in Mayan subaltern experiences. Rivas also showed his profound understanding of Mayan cosmology through the elaboration of an almanac that attempted to unite two distinct scientific discourses (Mayan science and Western Enlightenment). Needless to say, these endeavors were considered heresy by the Catholic Church and Rivas was quickly incarcerated. Unrepentant, he embarked on realizing what Kashanipour regards as the New World’s first case of science fiction. Rivas’s tale, which features an Earthling visiting the moon, negotiates attitudes of morality and scientific progress: the Earthling – a French scientist – comes upon a society governed by the principles of Enlightenment, while on earth the inquisition (in tandem with evil alien forces from the sun) threatens human(ist) progress. Due to the ‘blurred’ and therefore ‘heretical’ nature of Rivas’s works, the Inquisition suppressed his writings for centuries. Kashanipour’s essay discusses a prime example of the splits between diverse sets of knowledge and colonial power relations, which led to the rejection and subsequent fugitivity of nonconcordant epistemologies.

In one of its meanings, the fugitivity of knowledge refers to the massive blanks in the historical record that are often evoked but just as often ignored when investigating particular phenomena and events. In his essay “The Man Who Faced the Saber-Toothed Cat,” *Pedro de Luna* introduces one of these forgotten agents from the colonial contact zone in America, the Danish naturalist Peter Wilhelm Lund. In 1843, Lund discovered human bones mingled with the bones of extinct animals in caves in Minas Gerais, Brazil. The scientific community, which was intent on finding a replacement for the waning Biblical narrative of earth’s

history, should have been electrified by this discovery, which attested to the fact that man had been present in America – and in the world – for much longer than had been assumed by such scholars as Georges Cuvier. But Lund, himself a Cuvier disciple, instead of brokering his work in a bid for scientific celebrity status, suddenly ceased his investigations; his discovery left hardly a trace in the historical record. As Luna argues, there were many reasons for Lund's actions, or rather inactions, among them his ill health, slow access to publication, and, perhaps most decisive, the financial problems that had arisen from failed speculative investments he had made in the colonial economy. Moving between a spiritually disquieting understanding of the Brazilian deep past and an ill-fated commercial venture in the colonial present, Lund brings together in one historical figure some of the major aspects of the coloniality of knowledge. Geographically peripheral and epistemologically unacceptable for many of his contemporaries, the knowledge Lund produced, and then chose not to pursue any further, was perhaps too 'fuzzy' and confusing to gain entrance into the Western scientific canon.

Section five, *Embattled Historiographies Between Latin America and the United States*, speaks to the effects on the United States' investment in knowledge production in Latin America. Shifting to Central American history of the nineteenth century, Victor Acuña's essay "Connected Histories of the United States, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica" takes a look at the Mesoamerican isthmus, a region which has recently come into the spotlight of public attention but is usually confined to discussions of early American civilizations. Acuña sees the reason for this marginalization as practiced not only by the dominant producers of academic knowledge in the US (who regard the isthmus as home to an American antiquity and neglect other aspects of its rich, modern history), and sharply takes to task a "brand of methodological nationalism" in both US and Central American historiography. As a countermeasure, Acuña commences his essay under the auspices of *histoire croisée*, analyzing how one particular event in Nicaragua – the partial takeover of the country by an alliance of US mercenaries (so-called filibusters) – has been discussed in three different national historiographies. While the incident serves as a pillar of national identity in Costa Rica, its status in Nicaragua is enmeshed in a complicated liaison with the Sandinista revolution of 1979 as the foundational myth of the modern Nicaraguan nation. In the US, on the other hand, the event was left on the bottom shelves of historical curiosities along with other (ultimately unsuccessful) imperial adventures. Examining how different actors shaped these diverging national perspectives, Acuña reminds us of the long-neglected "crossings and connections" in the research on the Nicaraguan filibuster episode, which situate the small isthmian country right at the center of an extended process of US national aggrandizement, expansionism, and imperialist aspirations. At the same time, the filibuster event also serves as the nucleus of a fervent Nicaraguan nationalism by imagining it as the focal point of national unity in the face of an external enemy. The filibuster episode thus plays myriad roles in the national imaginary of the three countries Acuña investigates; yet, aca-

demics have failed to consider a comparative perspective, operating – and continuing to operate – according to the dogma of nationalist narratives of collective identity, accompanied by politically driven “emphases and silences.”

In “US Scholars in South America and the Question of Imperial Knowledge,” *Ricardo Salvatore* enhances Acuna’s argument by examining how in the nineteenth and early twentieth century US scholars sought to incorporate South America into their realm of politico-academic research. Pushed forward by a range of scholars from different disciplines, their projects amounted to what Salvatore calls “disciplinary interventions,” an imperial drive provoked by an intimate entanglement between the scholars’ career ambitions and the need of governmental agencies to acquire academic knowledge in service of political and economic imperatives. In his essay, Salvatore reminds us that the nations south of Panama were considered off-limits for direct imperial interventions, in stark contrast to their Central American neighbors, who were regarded as fair game for US tutelage. Furthermore, South America in the late nineteenth century was rendered a forgotten region by US researchers, urgently to be rediscovered by self-proclaimed scientific conquistadors. The geographical, social, political, and economic knowledge accumulated by US scientists consequently portrayed South America as a field of scholarly political experimentation: comprising societies on the brink of modernity, which were to be shaped into Fordist perfection with US assistance. In spite of critical voices from these very scholars, who warned against adopting a simplistic, overly optimistic approach, policy makers and their academic colleagues rapidly melded the knowledge gleaned from field trips into a new research area: Latin American Studies, later to evolve into Area Studies, an eminent branch of Cold War US foreign policy. Salvatore’s contribution not only traces the imperial foundations of this academic discipline, but also delineates how knowledge about the complexity of raw data is silenced when the (political) need to use these data is articulated by powerful actors.

An Epilogue by *Ali Behdad*, one of the leading experts in discovering and analyzing unknown literary and visual archives of cross-cultural encounters, concludes this volume.

In it, Behdad artfully weaves together an investigation of his family’s photographic archives with a postcolonial critique of social “anamnesia” that denies agency and visibility to “epistemologically repressed” subjects – both diachronically and synchronically. He strongly argues for a “committed and sustained engagement with the politics of contemporaneity” to counter the ongoing effects of this anamnesia.

In their respective ways, all the essays in this collection gesture toward the cross-cultural dynamics of power involved in the making of our modern knowledge system. They provide examples of how decisions are made about what counts as (scientific) knowledge, how and in what form it is preserved, how it is (re)used and in which contexts, and the ways in which it is blocked from further usage. To a great extent these decisions determine if (and in which configura-

tions) knowledge becomes fugitive, at least for a specific time or a specific group of people. Yet, resistance lurks in every act of domination, and so the ongoing project of getting hold of fugitive knowledges is not a futile enterprise, but is instead an important step toward a better understanding of past and present cultural encounters.

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**CONTESTING IMPERIAL  
KNOWLEDGES AND  
COLONIAL MYTHS**



## **“But in Itself, the Law is Only White”: Knowledge Claims and Universality in the History of Cultural Encounters**

GUNLÖG FUR

For the historian everything begins with sources. They are the foundation for our knowledge claims. And so I will begin with a cultural encounter and a quote, firmly rooted in a specific time and place, involving named and identified historical actors.

During the second half of the nineteenth century the Canadian government assumed sovereignty over a vast territory stretching from the Rocky Mountains in the west to the Great Lakes in the east, and sought to settle the area through a series of treaties with the many First Nations peoples inhabiting and laying claims to this land. Mistahimaskwa, or Big Bear as the English knew him, was a Cree-Ojibwe leader who lived between c. 1825 and 1888. He was the first of the western leaders to refuse to sign Treaty 6 with the Canadian government. Treaty 6 and Treaty 7 were up for discussion in the period between 1876 and 1889 and concerned 311,000 square kilometers. This land was home to at least eight different nations. Mistahimaskwa sought to build a coalition between nations on both sides of the line white authorities had drawn between Canada and the United States. At a conference held in Fort Pitt, Manitoba, in 1876, Lieutenant Governor Alexander Morris attempted to convince Big Bear of the advantages of inclusion in the Canadian nation. Its constitution was color blind, Morris asserted, and everyone would be treated as equals: “The Law is the same for red and white.” Big Bear, however, was not convinced. He responded: “That may be. But itself, it is only white” (Wiebe 31).<sup>1</sup>

Big Bear voices a concern that continues to trouble the research of cultural interactions. It is in the nature of universalizing perspectives, voiced for whatever purpose, that they obscure their origins and threaten to silence alternatives, regardless of their validity or influence. How, then, can we account for the intersections, contentions, imbalances, and bridge building that are among the ways in which human beings narrate and engage with their world?

In this text I will turn to empirical examples from cultural encounters in colonial contact zones in North America and in Northern Scandinavia to discuss four

1 Contentions among and between Indians and whites regarding these treaties were many. For discussions of the treaties that also take into account indigenous oral history, see Price.

aspects of knowledge contestation and how it may not only be possible, but also imperative to listen to contentious claims. In this case, the focus is on textual sources, written by representatives of colonial powers, and I will argue that these may be used to suggest indigenous perspectives and agency despite their one-sided origin.

I approach the problem of fugitive or elusive knowledge with a historian's pragmatism. I contend that to do history in and of the contact zone requires assuming both the relative autonomy of human beings who lived their lives in the "then," and the accessibility of parts of their life and agency. The inevitably flawed and partial picture we construct of the past is a consequence of the limits and bias of the sources, but also of the situatedness and limitations of the researcher. From the perspective of a historian trained in European and American academic traditions, I aim to say something about the possibility of sources, about methodologies of reading and listening, about the construction of authoritative/authorized narratives and, finally, about different knowledge regimes and academic practices. My basic argument is simple: there are sources and it is possible to utilize them to say something about contentious knowledge claims in the contact zone, but one needs a slightly different toolbox than the one commonly available in academic scholarship.

## The Potential of Sources

I began by stating that sources are the foundation for the historian's work. This does not mean, however, that historians must fetishize those sources. Indeed, that is clearly one of the problems in historical research concerning colonial encounters. If the sources are not there, what can we say? The deceptively modest question – "But are there any sources for that?" – hides assumptions about what knowledge is, what kind of knowledge is possible, and about truth and reality. I started with an actual encounter, between Big Bear and Morris, but the pieces of dialogue are from Rudy Wiebe's 1973 novel, *The Temptations of Big Bear*. I quoted from a novel deliberately. History writing does not simply reflect sources, it arranges those sources into narratives, it adds connections and meanings to fragments of lives lived in a manner not dissimilar to the work of a novelist. Historical writing is not the same as fictional storytelling, but it contains elements of construction, as historians deal with shards from the past and determine how to put them together. Thus, notions about what constitutes knowledge are always part of any historical re/construction. In Wiebe's case, his fictional account of Big Bear's struggles released archival documentation that had rarely made its way into official Canadian history, yet he did so in such a way that rendered the actual archival research invisible (van Toorn 113–14). Historians need to do both in order to challenge historical practice and reveal knowledge contestations within historical encounters.

However, fiction holds no monopoly on voices that 'talk back'. In 1634, Lord Baltimore, governor of the Maryland colony, was confronted with an early parallel to Big Bear's assessment of the universal claims of English law. Wicomesse Indians on Chesapeake Bay had killed a white man and Lord Baltimore wanted the culprits delivered to him for English justice to be carried out. A Patuxent man, who according to Indian legal practice acted as a middleman in the dispute, replied:

It is the manner amongst us Indians, that if any such accident happen, wee doe redeeme the life of a man that is so slaine, with 100. armes length of Roanoke and since that you are heere strangers, and come into our Countrey, you should rather conforme your selves to the Customes of our Countrey, then impose yours upon us. ("Relation of Maryland" 89–90)

Wiebe's fictional exchange and the Patuxent man's allegedly factual response acutely capture the character of the entangled arguments that occurred repeatedly over centuries of encounters. Indigenous peoples across the globe entered into dialogues, argued, claimed, railed, fought against European colonial assumptions, whether religious, legal, or philosophical. At times, this may have occurred out of curiosity and joy in debating, but it also became an absolute necessity in order to explain and defend their viewpoints and practices. European missionaries, colonial officers, and settlers more often than not ignored such commentary at their own peril. This is why early modern encounters abound in argumentation. American Indians and, in northern Scandinavia, Sami people debated the missionaries' religious claims of Christian doctrine; they argued about land and the nature of its use and alienation; they presented their understandings of history; and, like Big Bear and the Patuxent Indian, they asserted their own jurisdictional sovereignty. In doing so, they unmasked both the regional nature of European culture and the universal claims undergirding European expansion. The sources testify to their rejection of these claims.

I find, in fact, a plethora of comments emanating from American Indian and Sami spokespersons, nested in the written documentary evidence of encounters, and I suggest that their presence is no coincidence. Let me use an example from early modern Sweden. There, too, it became fashionable in the seventeenth century to collect exotic objects and descriptions of wild and heathen peoples. War booty and purchases were used to enlarge private collections, and owning and displaying curiosities increased the owners' status. Dressing up in exotic costumes became a form of entertainment at the royal court and in aristocratic homes, and thus spread the interest in curious peoples. One of the greatest collectors was Count Magnus Gabriel de la Gardie (1622–1686), at one point the wealthiest man in the realm (Losman 85–101). It was on his initiative that pastors assigned to

outposts in the north were asked to submit descriptions of the Samis,<sup>2</sup> accounts that Johannes Schefferus summarized in his monumental work *Lapponia*, which was printed in Latin in Frankfurt in 1673, then almost immediately emerged in English, German, French, and Dutch translations. These priestly accounts form a body of invaluable information on seventeenth-century Sami life, even when not read against their grain. However, they also allowed for a certain intertextuality that opened up textual gates for discordant voices that challenge the hegemonic structures of knowledge in the accounts. The earliest of these descriptions were written in the first decades of the seventeenth century, while the bulk stems from the period from 1670 to 1690. Nicolaus Lundius was one of these writers. He was a Sami himself but had been educated among Swedes and served as a sexton in Ume Lappmark.<sup>3</sup> He had apparently read at least some of the other accounts because he clearly seeks to correct information that he deemed false. “I see that Samuel Rheen writes that Lapps wear clothes made out of hides in the summer [...] never did I see a Lapp wearing a skin skirt [kirtle] except during winter time” (Lundius 31).<sup>4</sup>

According to strict source criticism, the intertextuality of Lundius’ account casts doubt on its usefulness as historical source. It suggests that Lundius’ description depended upon those of the other pastors whose accounts he had read (Rydving 36). However, another way to interpret his comments is that Lundius consciously attempted to rectify what he considered to be erroneous information. A close reading of his account suggests that one of Lundius’s aims was to deconstruct uniform representations of Sami life, culture, and people. In Lundius’s description Samis could be rich and poor, dark and blonde, generous and rude; faith and customs varied and so did the roles of men and women. While most other descriptions emphasized a strict separation between gendered tasks, Lundius broke up the neat categorization: “Some of the Lapps make much better baskets than the womenfolk do, [...] I know a Lapp in Umeå Lappmark, who sews better with pewter thread than any female person” (Lundius 39).

Lundius also offers one Sami perspective on encounters with Swedish legal and religious authorities, and on the demands these authorities placed on them. Samis were required to visit marketplaces and participate in church services at least once a year. Toward the end of the seventeenth century the church mounted forceful campaigns to eradicate Sami religious practices, through the destruction of sacred sites and drums, through religious instruction, and demands that baptisms, burials, and weddings be performed in the church. Lundius reports

2 I have elected to use the plural form of “Samis” even though the more common usage is “Sami” in order to counteract any notion of the ethnographic singular. Sami people were diverse, just like Swedes or Norwegians.

3 Sami people were in the majority in the northern region of Lapland throughout the seventeenth century, except in coastal towns, where Swedes lived. “Lapp” was the term used for Sami people in seventeenth-century sources. The entire region was divided into so-called *Lappmarks*, each a district comprising several villages.

4 All translations from Swedish sources are mine (GF).

on discussions the Samis held among themselves: "Did you hear how the pastor preached last holiday about our drums and our sacrifices and our other practices [...] should we not do as our forefathers have done, that we will never refrain from in our country" (Lundius 33). The local court met during these market weeks, and while much of the discourse centered on issues of internal interest to the Sami communities, Swedish law and customs exerted a particularly onerous pressure in certain areas. Court records from throughout Sweden document an increasing, and compared to other parts of Europe, unusual interest in regulating pre- and extramarital sex. Censuring sex before marriage was dictated by the Swedish crown and church while such behavior seems not to have been similarly chastised in Sami society. Lundius again offers an insight. He writes that the Ume Samis in particular (apparently the group most familiar to him) feared the Swedish bailiff and on their way to the market, they would strategize about what should be said about young women who had become pregnant during the year (Lundius 21, 30). Lundius not only presents information that other accounts did not, he also comments on Swedish attempts to elicit knowledge regarding Sami religious and cultural practices for purposes of control: "[T]hey do not reveal their art; except it happens when they are drunk and one can then with care find out something from them, as well as from their children, but they sternly admonish their children not to tell anything to Swedish people" (Lundius 32).

As this one account from the Lappmarks indicates, there are historical sources that offer significant and at times provocative material – if only scholars are prepared to listen. Lundius, a Sami man who had learned to write, was most certainly aware of the nature and value of written texts, and his attempt to right the record is evidence of that. Often, however, the written sources available from such early periods of colonial encounters only represent the dominant European colonial perspectives. Yet, even these are useful and revealing. As American historian Michael Witgen has recently argued, the

evidence capturing the Native perspective of this ongoing colonial encounter [...] is often readily available. This is not necessarily a matter of reading European texts against the grain. It is, rather, more simply a matter of reading texts written by Europeans without privileging the fantasies of discovery. [...] The key to reading these texts, and others like them, is figuring out how to disentangle expectation from reality. (Witgen 15)

## Methodologies of Reading and Listening

How do we achieve that disentanglement? I have worked from a number of assumptions about how the source material from early colonial encounters is constituted. One of these is that American Indian and Sami people soon learned the value of written texts and consciously sought to place certain ideas and claims in

those texts, while remaining silent on others. Another assumption is that information that appears as anomalous or marginal is significant and can and should be taken into account (Fur, “Reading Margins”). The problem, as I have seen it, is not that there are no sources, but that sources are often disconnected fragments – whether in the shape of written comments and notes, or shards found in archaeological digs. Classical scientific source criticism, as historians developed it in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, does not suffice (Tosh 57–71). The challenge is to take these shards and turn them into possibilities. Rather than deciding what is the main focus of the source, its primary intention, and its dependence on other sources, it often becomes necessary to investigate that which is only alluded to, half-spoken, or mentioned in passing. I have found that it is often the marginal comments and anomalous accounts that are most useful. And not only useful: margins have the potential of subverting conventional narratives.

Margins have the capacity to reveal and provide us with perspectives that go beyond vision, which is the sense most favored in academic scholarship. We talk, for example, about focusing on something, taking a closer look at, gaining a proper view on. The emphasis on vision, on seeing something from afar, has led to an epistemological practice that renders the observer both unseen and seemingly objective (Keller and Grontkowski; Haraway). This is not the only way to make sense of the world, however. Nigerian sociologist Oyèrónké Oyewùmí, for example, identifies a major difference between Yoruba and Western epistemic foundations in that the latter privileges sight, while the former emphasizes “a multiplicity of senses anchored by hearing” (Oyewùmí 14). In addition to this important reminder, there are still other ways of challenging the perspectives of written sources. Concentrating on one thing, as one does when one focuses, produces at the same time a blurred, or unseen, perimeter. This perimeter is blurred only in relation to that which is in focus, and is not a characteristic of this space in itself. It is with that assertion that I turn to perspectives, notions, functions, and presences of and in the margin.

I understand margins to refer analytically to four different sociological and spatial positions and processes: as a line, a space, a process, and a strategy.<sup>5</sup> First of all, as a *line* or *limes* the margin defines the outer edge of a group or nation. This boundary contains centers and peripheries, structured by relations of power and influence. These lines determine what is considered inside and outside, and the drawing of lines establishes categories. Secondly, I imagine the margin as the *creation of a space*, such as when two collectives meet. A space materializes at the intersection formed by the encounter, a marginal space that develops its own needs, requirements, and hierarchies, and which in time may grow into

5 I have developed these ideas about margins and marginalization as an analytical model to apply to historical sources, one that allows for interpretations of Native agency. In no way is it meant to deny the historical reality of marginalization that subaltern people as well as women have experienced, and that has involved a loss of autonomy and a denial of equality.

a new center. This space can be both geographical and mental. Marginal zones evolve out of encounters, particularly when the balance is not already predetermined. Encounters and confrontations shape cultures, as understandings of ethnicity and specific characteristics emerge out of constructions of self and others. However, encounters also lead to entanglements that produce novel demands and possibilities. In North American historiography, colonial interactions in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries have been described as creating a confusing, frustrating, and hard to characterize "middle ground" that constituted a new world for all involved (White; Merrell, *Indians*). Scholars have called eastern North America a "cacophony of voices," and a "kaleidoscope of cultures" (Denning 1–6; Merrell, "Cast" 34). In such spaces there is an uncertainty both about where to locate power and what its expressions are. The margins may suddenly appear as the center. For historians, it is vital not to unquestioningly accept the projection that emanates from the sources' assumed center. The more or less conscious *process* of articulating margins involves a struggle to define where the outer edge of a society or culture should be and who belongs there and not in the center. I distinguish the line itself, and the process and agents by which a line or boundary is established, as different entities for scholarly investigation, where the process contains contestations over power and agency as well as attention to changes over time. Finally, this struggle over where boundaries are to be drawn allows historical agents to consciously employ a *strategy* using overlapping claims regarding marginality and centrality. Individuals and groups may take advantage of these uncertain or fuzzy contact zones in order to ascertain influence and redraw boundaries in these fluctuating mental and physical spaces (Fur, "Historiska"; Fur, "Reading Margins").

My argument is that the sociological and spatial fluctuations of centers and peripheries created by cultural encounters should be taken into account when reading textual sources. From these abstract categories I have sought to develop a methodological toolkit to complement that of conventional source criticism. Do the historical sources describe marginal spaces as spaces that are unclear, uncategorized, and uncontrolled? Where were lines drawn between different groups, who was included, who was painted as a stranger? Who was pushed out of the source, located in the margins, or completely ignored? Do people or objects appear in unexpected places or act in unexpected ways?

It is with these questions in mind that I have found that the asides and commentaries in Lundius's descriptions of Ume and Lule Samis add new dimensions to the claims of the Samis themselves. His statement that Samis tried to restrict the information that reached Swedish authorities can shed light on a report by Georg Wallin, a bishop who visited a Sami village in the early eighteenth century. He describes how he tried to pry information regarding what he deemed to be heathenish practices with drums out of an intoxicated Sami man, Nils Clemmetzon. The man seems to be just on the brink of divulging his secrets when someone stops him. "His wise little wife from Norway, fell in with his conversation,

and confounded his concepts” (“Resa till Årsilla Lappmark” December 28, 1715). Prior to this comment, Wallin had made no reference to the wife, and she remains nameless. She would have been nearby in order to hear, but apparently on the margins of the Swedish pastor’s field of vision. Missionaries and pastors rarely focused on Sami women but directed their attention to the practices and beliefs of Sami men. From her position, she could tell where the conversation was heading and jumped in to protect her husband from possibly severe punishment, and her cultural knowledge from exploitation. In the context of a Sami community, whose religious secrets were under constant threat of being divulged and taken advantage of, the wife’s position on the periphery of the Swedish bishop’s gaze allowed her to perceive the danger and enter the conversation before it was too late. Her role, as that of many Sami women, may have been central to preserving Sami culture precisely because they were of marginal interest to the Swedish officials (e.g. Rydving 151–54).

### **Authoritative Narratives of History**

Descriptions of indigenous peoples and cultural encounters thus contain plenty of indigenous voices and arguments. But the study of indigenous cultures, such as the Samis in Sweden, served not only the purpose of understanding them in order to assimilate them, but also formed part of the construction of a national history. Indeed, one particularly salient aspect of the processes of marginalization occurs in the construction of histories. To some extent this is of course a truism. Historians everywhere pick and choose what to tell and in what order. This does not mean that one story is true and the others false. However, some become authoritative and authorized versions of history, while others are forced into exile. Pehr Högström, a Swedish pastor stationed in the Lappmark district of Gällivare in the mid-eighteenth century, wrote in 1747 that to study the Sami would offer Swedes a window onto “how our old forefathers, the Swedes and Goths, had formerly lived everywhere” (Högström, *Beskrifning* 37–38). It is likely that this ethnographic idea of development is one of the reasons Lapland came to take on the symbolic function as ‘cradle’ for that which was considered Swedish. For many early scientists and historians, Lapland functioned as a window through which they could view the past. One prominent example is found in Erik Dahlberg’s monumental *Suecia Antiqua et Hodierna* (published posthumously in 1716). Dahlberg, who had received a royal letter of privilege in 1661 directing him to depict the Swedish kingdom and its provinces, produced images of Swedish towns, estates, and landscapes intended to “spread light and glory over the fatherland in the past and thus also in the present” (Dahlberg 2). The tension between past and present is explicit in his portrayals. The Samis and their culture symbolize the duchy of Lapland, with the background of the well-known ‘wild man of the north’, consisting of such details as a Sami round hut, drum, sacrificial site,

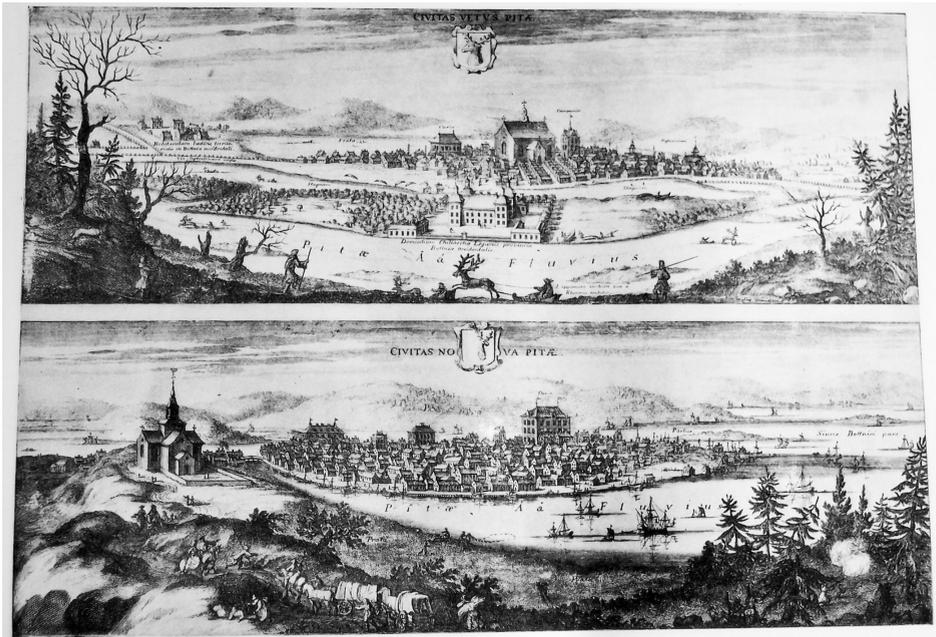


Fig. 1: The northern coastal town of Piteå, in Erik Dahlberg’s *Suecia Antiqua et Hodierna* (1716). The top half is an illustration of the old town of Piteå, and in it reindeer-drawn Sami sleds transport people on the river and riverbank. In the new town, however, Swedish settlements have expanded across the river, and it is now dominated by a church and horse-drawn carts.

and skis. In Dahlberg’s images of the coastal towns of Piteå (Fig. 1) and Luleå it becomes clear that the Samis belong to the past.

Samis and reindeer are foregrounded in the representations of the ‘old’ towns, but in the ‘new’ towns these Sami modes of transportation are replaced with ships and horse-drawn carts, and Samis no longer dominate the waterways and coastal plains. These visual representations thus push the Samis out of focus and into the margins, obliterate them, in fact, in a way that corresponds less to actual Sami presence in the area but more to a belief in a certain kind of historiography. While some authors contrasted Sami culture and practices with Swedish ones in a call for moral regeneration, authoritative delineations increasingly employed such comparisons to establish historical continuity and change.<sup>6</sup> Instead of a window to a shared past, Lapland came to be seen as a mirror in which progressivist Swedes could observe how far they themselves had traveled along a road from nature to culture while romanticists could bewail what had been lost along the way (Nordin; Lindmark; Broberg, “Lappkaravaner”).

6 Linnaeus traveled to the north of the Scandinavian peninsula in the 1730s, and upon his return wrote with appreciation of Sami culture and lifestyle, which he considered in some ways superior to the depraved customs of contemporary Swedish city life (Linnaeus; Broberg, *Homo Sapiens* 262–65).

Records show that Sami people contested this understanding of the past and of relationships between Swedes and themselves. I have detected an oral presence in the documentary record of Sami-Swedish encounters during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that I suggest is neither random nor insignificant. When representatives of the Swedish crown and church presented their interpretations and claims when they encountered Samis during court sessions, in church services, or in conversations, Samis responded by referring to “our land” and “our ancestors.” “*The old people knew to tell...*” was a statement employed to pose historical arguments about time and place, and it demonstrates that while a linear interpretation of the past and its relation to the present – i.e., a teleological view of history – is neither necessary nor inescapable, it does form an integral part of the colonial historical narrative. In the 1740s, Högström reported that “some Lapps emphasize their contention, that their ancestors in earlier days were the owners of all of Sweden; but that our ancestors drove them away and diminished their land more and more.” Seventy years earlier, another Lappmark pastor similarly reported Sami oral historical claims that they had initially resisted Swedish intrusion, and had “gripped their weapons, seeking therewith to defend their self-chosen Freedom” (Högström, *Beskrifning* 39; Tornæus 25). Sami origin stories emphasized the different trajectories of the two peoples:

The old people tell that Lapps and Swedes had once been one people, and their ancestors were siblings who had the same father and mother. But it so happened, that when a storm brewed, one became frightened, and tried to hide beneath a board. His descendants became Swedes, and God let the board be changed into a house. But the other, who was bolder and would not seek protection, became the original father of the Lapps, who still today have their abode almost under the naked sky. (Högström, *Beskrifning* 58)

While Swedish writers increasingly constructed a view of the Sami past as joined with the Swedish, with the former preceding and demonstrating the less developed stages of the latter, Samis argued for different historical arcs, concurrent in time, but separate in direction and space.<sup>7</sup> The phrase “The old people” – in essence Sami historians – presents a version of history that suggests that Samis and Swedes were related but different. In the oral history passed down among Sami people, the struggle to maintain their territory and cultural practices against the invasions of Swedish forces loomed large. Their society and lifeways were threatened and their “self-chosen Freedom” lost to the violent onslaught from the south. It is significant that the stories of armed struggle were preserved in Sami oral histories, but not in official Swedish administrative sources.<sup>8</sup>

7 The inclusion of Samis in the stadial theory of development that unfolded during the Enlightenment has been studied by Linda Andersson Burnett.

8 Andrew Newman presents an evocative argument for reading indigenous oral accounts in written colonial sources as a way to interrogate the colonialists’ version of events (Newman 92–93).

Swedish sources use the Sami comments to demonstrate the weakness and lack of reason in Sami arguments, but my methodology of attention to marginal spaces allows me to read these oral statements as rhetorical incursions and as the positing of Sami claims in Swedish sources. That is how I interpret the following account by Pehr Högström. On the road to Gällivare in the 1740s, the pastor – his Sami guides supposing him to be asleep – eavesdropped on their campfire conversation. The men talked about how during their travels Högström had tried to wheedle information out of them regarding their use of drums and sacred places, and now, under the cover of darkness, they planned their responses should he probe again. The following day Högström broached the topic and one man, named Anders Ersson Snadda, responded cautiously:

He said that he had heard tell from old people, how happily and in what good condition people had lived in the time when they could freely use these sacred places, and how strange fates and occurrences had befallen them and that general poverty had increased ever since so many obstacles had been placed in the way of these practices. (Högström, *Missionsförrättningar* 55)

Snadda and his companions were voicing an interpretation of conflict, clearly arguing that Samis had not seamlessly faded into the shadows of the past, but that their present condition was linked to Swedish oppressive measures. His rejoinder enunciates a claim that it was precisely through a loss of spiritual guidance, tied to specific spaces, that Sami society had fallen into poverty, and this loss had come about through Swedish violence, thus implicitly critiquing the view of the inevitability of their demise. I suggest that the idea that Sami culture presented a window into a common origin, and that Samis were doomed to vanish is part of a colonial imaginary of predestined progress while in reality modernization was neither historically inevitable, nor did it take place without opposition, protest, and concurrent claims. As a critical reading of the sources indicates, the telological interpretation of history that served as justification for establishing control over Sami territories and knowledge was not scripted in an uncontested way.

## **Dead White Men and Academic Practice**

History, argues Dipesh Chakrabarty in his important critique of the discipline, “came to non-European peoples in the nineteenth century as somebody’s way of saying ‘not yet’ to somebody else.” This is a consequence of a historicism that understands events to be connected over time and moving in a specific direction. This structure of time follows what Chakrabarty identifies as “first in Europe and then elsewhere,” and Johannes Fabian describes as “the denial of coevalness” (Chakrabarty 7–8; Fabian 31, *passim*). This, argues sociologist Gurminder Bhabra, constitutes “a form of unacknowledged Eurocentrism” that is inherent in “the

very methodology of comparative analysis.” Thus, the failure to include “the others” does not follow on shortcomings of individual scholars, but is “a consequence of the methodological tools utilized” (Bhambra 139).

Can we access other forms of knowledge and get a sense of the meaning of their exile only via theories and practices handed down from the brilliant minds of white, European men (most of them now dead)? My answer is no. I have long looked at areas where ‘Europe’ was not dominant, such as the Arctic world, and the American world, but all I had were tools (methodological and theoretical) developed in Europe. Why was Marx any more relevant to understanding interactions in Native America than, for example, Tatanga Mani (Walking Buffalo of the Stonies in Canada)? My problem was the same as the one Big Bear posited in his response to Alexander Morris. Even though my mind was full of good intentions, the tools I had to aid me were all made in Europe, and subject to distinct modes of use, one of them being the assumption that these tools worked the same everywhere in the world.

It does not mean that European thinking is meaningless, but that it should be seen as just as regional and spatially restricted as other forms of knowledge – as “provincial,” as Dipesh Chakrabarty has put it. According to Chakrabarty, it is not possible to conceive of plural claims on history without “radically questioning the nature of historical time.” To allow for the possibility of what he calls “subaltern pasts” (106) requires questioning two dominant ontological assumptions of modern Western political theory. First, that one single and secular stream of time envelops all human existence, and second, that combined with a sociological explanation for the belief in gods and spirits, which amounts to a devaluation of spiritual beliefs, human beings are “ontologically singular” (15–16). There is “no third voice” that adjudicates between different and discordant voices, but “we have to stay with both, and with the gap between them that signals an irreducible plurality in our experiences of historicity [...] Thus the writing of history must implicitly assume a plurality of times existing together” (108–109).

History thus occurs in a contested terrain of multiple and concurrent voices and actions. Steven Feierman asks, in the context of writing about Western Africa, how it might be possible to “construct an account of world history within a single framework, if the principles of social organization of Lemba, or in Igboland, are different from principles in Europe?” His response is that historians

must struggle to understand the place of the historical actor within a complex web of local cultural understandings and at the same time avoid seeing that action only in local terms. Local actors were, at one and the same time, orienting their actions to the local context and playing on a world stage, influencing worldwide historical processes. (48, 52)

Ethnohistorical methodology represents one approach to this problem. It challenges romanticized notions of culture that hold that some peoples had only cul-

ture while others also had history and change; that some had myths and stories, while others had science and rationality. Instead, ethnohistorical research early on sought to demonstrate that all peoples acted rationally, not just Euro-Americans (Martin, Trigger). It was just a question of understanding or recovering what it was that made sense to certain people in specific contexts. However, it still meant employing European concepts in a way that universalized them – universally applicable concepts with local touches. In order to interpret the fragments of knowledge scattered across the European written accounts of colonial encounters, I have turned increasingly to contemporary indigenous epistemology. The continuation of my scholarly journey has meant venturing into the realm of indigenous thinking to try to learn more about how the world may be imagined and interpreted employing concepts and methods relevant to such philosophies and societies. I wish to underscore that what I express here are my interpretations of readings in indigenous philosophies. I humbly make use of what I understand in the hopes of opening up to the acceptance of new modes of knowledge the rich and voluminous, but one-sided, written source material from early contact zones. I contend that an essential point of departure in the studies of cultural encounters is that indigenous ‘cultures’ – however we define them – possessed the capacity to act with relative independence and to give cultural expression to their experience of change before, during, and after contact with colonialism (Fur “Cultural Confrontations”). Internal and external conflicts erupted and were settled absent from any colonial connections. Most of these we know little of due to the limitations of sources dealing with the period. Dissension and choices were dealt with from the perspective of each collective’s own expert knowledge of the ecological environment in which it lived. Decisions were based on this knowledge and on people’s conscious reflections on power, economy, and the challenges of subsistence.

I would like to focus here on two aspects that appear to me significant for how history may be utilized, interpreted and retold: *boundedness* and *reciprocity*. Sami scholar Rauna Kuokkanen has explored the relationship between indigenous knowledge systems and academic tradition through the indigenous concept of gift-giving. She describes indigenous epistemes as characterized by “a set of shared and common perceptions and conceptions of the world related to ways of life, cultural and social practices and discourses that foreground and necessitate an intimate relationship with the natural environment.” Such relationships are formed in “close interaction of sustaining and renewing the balance of the world by means of gifts” and produce a philosophy emphasizing reciprocity (Kuokkanen 65). This clearly challenges modes of learning that build on extraction based on visual discovery. Kuokkanen argues that it is necessary for the academy “to commit to reciprocal relationships with and actively recognize other worldviews in order to address its own ignorance” (Kuokkanen 77–78).

During the early part of the twentieth century, Tatanga Mani, or Walking Buffalo, leader of the Stoney tribe in western Canada, often expressed a view of

practices that require “an intimate relationship with the natural environment” and the importance of such practices for attaining knowledge:

Did you know that trees talk? Well, they do. They talk to each other, and they’ll talk to you if you listen. Trouble is, white people don’t listen. They never learned to listen to the Indians so I don’t suppose they’ll listen to other voices in nature. But I have learned a lot from trees: sometimes about the weather, sometimes about animals, sometimes about the Great Spirit. (McLuhan 23)

Tatanga Mani, who was born in 1871, briefly attended a mission school, but always declared that despite never obtaining a high school education “he attended the best university of all, nature’s great university of the outdoors” (MacEwan 176). Nature, he maintained, would reveal truth “to those who truly seek” (175).

Kuokkanen’s insistence on reciprocity, and Tatanga Mani’s on listening to nature, both point toward a *relational* conceptualization of knowledge. Of indigenous knowledge systems, philosopher Laurie Ann Whitt offers this précis:

The natural world, the community, and the individual are all integrally involved. Individuals are subject to independent forces, and constrained by the need to act with respect for the natural world and for future generations. The community grounds and informs the individual. However, since the process of knowing is experientially based, and what one learns depends on individual development, abilities, and preparation, individuals play an essential role in contributing new knowledge to the community. (Whitt 207)

This approach to learning demands “receptivity, reciprocity, and responsibility to the natural and human worlds in which one is situated” (Whitt 207). It focuses on the individual, yet requires of the individual a sustained and responsible relationship to both natural and human environments. I interpret this to mean that knowledge is not detached from the situation and relationships in which it is formed, and that the relationships in which the holder or transmitter of knowledge is engaged are as important as the content itself.

I began with an exchange that concerned land and law. Dale Turner, Anishinabe from Ontario, argues that American Indians experience “the world from within different, deeply embedded understandings of time, space, and human history.” He writes:

“homeland” is not simply lands, but everything around one’s world: land, air, water, stars, people, animals, and especially the spirit world. Understanding the balance in one’s world takes a long time, and one cannot hope to learn these relationships without being guided by people who possess, and practice, these forms of knowledge. This knowledge is passed on by the oral traditions of the community, and virtually

every Indigenous community practices the oral traditions in one form or other. (236)

Reciprocity between natural and human worlds and a sustained commitment to learning in relationships thus characterizes indigenous forms of knowing and has consequences for how history is interpreted. So does an understanding of place as being bounded: The Apache and Mexican philosopher Viola F. Cordova explains that American Indians "thought of themselves as being 'created' for one specific part of the planet," and the "idea of being part of a bounded space becomes the ground upon which a very intimate knowledge and understanding of the homeland is acquired" (Cordova 188). This meant that American Indians recognized that other peoples also belonged to places that had "a set of 'truths' that pertained to their own circumstances and locales" (Cordova 188). Cordova's assertion roundly contradicts the many rote descriptions in a host of colonial sources of indigenous peoples as roving nomads, without permanent homes or attachment to place.

One of the most interesting aspects that American Indian philosophers have stressed, and I believe one vital for understanding the different claims made by Europeans and Indians, regards different concepts of duality. A binary, discrete, dualist mode of logic is typical of Euro-American philosophies and languages, deeply structuring the way in which Europeans viewed Native peoples. In contrast, many indigenous peoples recognized dualist concepts that are nondiscrete, nonbinary, and complementary rather than opposite or hierarchical. Indigenous scholar Anne Waters (Seminole) describes this system as:

a dualism (e.g., male/female) that may appear (in a binary ontology) as opposites or things different from one another in some important respect; and (2) a nonbinary (complementary) syntax that puts together such constructs without maintaining sharp and clear boundary distinctions (unlike a binary system). The maintenance of the rigid distinct boundaries of binary logic enable (though may not necessitate) an hierarchical value judgment to take place (e.g., mind over body, or male over female) precisely because of the sharp bifurcation. A nonbinary (complementary) dualism would place the two constructs together in such a way that one would remain itself, and be also a part of the other. In this way, an hierarchical valuing of one being better, superior, or more valued than another cannot be, or rather is, excluded by the nonbinary logic. (98–99)

Waters goes on to claim that the pronounced overlapping categories of this indigenous ontology "create an experience of the world distinct from, but in every way equal to, the Western European ontology of discrete bounded entities" (Waters 107).

With these tools in hand, I believe it is possible to unlock comments and reflections that indigenous peoples left in the custody of written accounts. But the emphasis on nonbinary relationships, rather than hierarchical dualism, also

makes it vital to pay attention to the character of the encounter that produced the sources. Encounters in the contact zone gave rise to the kinds of narratives that enable reconstructions of knowledge claims. Sometimes the marginal nature, as posited in my theorization, situated both those who penned the accounts and those who shared their knowledge so as to enable information to flow or leak through boundaries, representations, and intentions. At other times, strict categorizations and an hierarchical ordering of the world of knowledge allowed for little more than representation based on observation. Two Swedish visitors to the Delaware Valley in the first half of the eighteenth century illustrate this argument.

Andreas Hesselius and Pehr Kalm both spent time in eastern North America during the first half of the eighteenth century, although during different periods. Both came with an ardent desire to observe and learn about the natural environment and the inhabitants of the region. Both produced writings that have proved immensely useful to subsequent scholars. Yet these writings also display differences that illuminate the epistemological and sociological underpinnings of their observations, and these had consequences for the encounters they had with environments foreign to them. As a pastor to the scattered Swedish congregations in Delaware and Pennsylvania between 1712 and 1724, Hesselius found himself forced to rely on his surroundings in order to feed and clothe his family and himself. He traveled vast distances on horseback to visit dispersed settlements; he hiked through forests and meadows, ambled along rivers and brooks, tirelessly collecting impressions and knowledge of the flora, fauna, and peoples of the area. Called by a historian “a linnaean before Linnaeus,” his diary offers an impressive and compelling description of a new world, including voices of its indigenous inhabitants (Fur, “Andreas”; Jacobsson).

Approximately two decades later Pehr Kalm landed at the docks of Philadelphia. In 1741, Kalm had become one of Linnaeus’s first students, and between the years 1748 and 1751 he traveled in North America. He also kept a diary, demonstrating a very different approach to learning, experience, and observation from that of Hesselius. Deeply steeped in the discourse of utility, always traveling with an ideological filter, as it were, consisting of the Linnaean system of categorization and of connections to authorities – scholarly and political – his methods are similar to contemporary academic practices but left little room for indigenous knowledge to enter his text.

Consequently, while Kalm’s diaries offer a wealth of ethnographic detail, they rarely afford any glimpses of indigenous agency or philosophy. They convey a great deal of information concerning material objects, but not on the meanings they carried. Kalm described and organized categories, but did not identify individual Indians by name. Names of individual Indians do not exist within this taxonomic system. “One day Indians were here, one of them had painted most of his face black with the soot they have on their pots, but on the right side of the face, from the forehead down to the mouth it was painted red with cinnabar; earrings with a triangular piece of silver at the end, which hung down; the hair mostly

shaved off on the head [...] all Indians, men and women have jet black hair; no scarf; bare chest; shirt on the body; sometimes with cuffs; no trousers” (Kalm vol. III 229). Often, when Kalm describes American Indians, he refers to information he had received from white sources, such as Benjamin Franklin’s son John, or the English naturalist John Bartram (Kalm vol. II 168, 172, 208–209). These men he does distinguish by name, and refers to their work appropriately. This served to lend authority to his account in much the same way that an academic system of footnotes and references does. While this makes knowledge traceable, that knowledge is almost exclusively European.

Hesselius’ approach differed significantly. Throughout his account actual encounters and personal experience prompted descriptions. He spoke of identified individuals whom he met in specific situations. Even when he offered generalized observations he was careful to point out that these were not timeless or universal characteristics. In this way, Hesselius expressed what we might call historical awareness, while Kalm primarily offered dehistoricized and denarrativized taxonomic ethnographic descriptions. Hesselius reports words and actions that he himself had encountered, identified by name and place. That is, they were bounded and reciprocal. Some examples: In 1716, his two-year-old son was seriously ill with intestinal worms. A Lenape Indian woman, named Chickalicka Nanni Kettelev, treated him with “some kind of root of grass” and the boy recovered. A chief named Pockhaels approached Hesselius to ask him to get some cinabar from his brother, who was a painter in Philadelphia, to paint his face with. Having attended two Indian burials, Hesselius noted that they were conducted in different manners, and he asked questions about funeral practices (Jacobsson 115, 123, 124, 133).<sup>9</sup>

To those who wished to listen, indigenous peoples expressed their understandings of the world. They continued to do so, over the centuries, in a language that reiterates the boundedness and reciprocal nature of knowledge. “As I understand nature’s ruler,” claimed Tatanga Mani in the mid-twentieth century, “he would not restrict his truth to a few favoured humans, allowing the others to remain in eternal darkness. If the Great Spirit is prepared to reveal secrets of importance to people, he will give all humans in all lands an equal chance of getting that enlightenment” (MacEwan 182).

9 At first glance, Hesselius and Kalm appear to illustrate perfectly Michel Foucault’s description of the difference between Renaissance and Classical epistemologies. Kalm’s disembodied and decontextualized representations fit well with Foucault’s description of natural history in the Classical age as “undertaking a meticulous examination of things themselves [...] and then of transcribing what it has gathered in smooth, neutralized, and faithful words” (Foucault 131). My interest here, however, is to point out that while Hesselius and Kalm arrive at similar descriptions of plants and other-than-human beings by employing different methodologies, when it comes to describing indigenous peoples the *consequence* of their methodologies is radically different: Hesselius writes them into history, while Kalm confines them to ethnology in the sense of “peoples without histories” (Foucault 376).

Small wonder then that indigenous people responded with such vigor to the universalized claims of colonists. In 1700, the Swedish pastor Jonas Aurén was sent on a mission trip to the Susquehannock town of Conestoga, where he entered into a debate with an old Indian man. The Conestoga man completely refuted Christian teachings:

Since the purport of this Errand is to perswade us to embrace a new Religion perhaps it may not be amiss – before we offer him our Reasons why we cannot comply – to lay before him the grounds and Principles of that Religion he would Perswade us to abandon [...]. The Parent mind for any thing we know may have Different modes of Communicating the Knowledge of himself to Different Nations of People. Some say they have the Divine Will in writing. Be it so. Their Revelation has no advantage above ours since both must produce the same salutary *Effect*. [...] He tells us there are many Precepts in his written Revelation which we are entirely Ignorant of but those written Commands could only be designd [sic] for those that have the writing. They cannot Possibly regard us. (“An Indian’s Answer”)

It is often true that fugitive knowledge remains hidden from view in colonial sources, perhaps consciously so, but just as likely as a consequence of genre constraints, audiences’ expectations, or ideological investment in a certain form of historicism. Yet, sometimes it is there, either in plain sight or furtively placed in the margins, and it remains our responsibility as scholars to give it consideration as expressions of indigenous concerns with the exchange of knowledge and struggle over meaning that cultural encounters set in motion.

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## Fugitive El Dorado: The Early History of an Amazonian Myth

NEIL SAFIER

The transmigration of female Amazons from Scythia in Asia Minor across the Atlantic to the Americas is an excellent example of the early modern imposition of European ideas onto the geography of the Americas, where a myth of isolated societies of bare-breasted women warriors alternatively – and almost contemporaneously – caught hold in the Caribbean and South America. The earliest European narratives of travel to the Americas, and the cartographic representations that arose in their wake, conjured a host of provocative images that fired Europe’s mythical imagination. In his description of Martinino Island, for instance, Columbus referred to an island “occupied entirely by women, without a single man,” and this tale was soon echoed in the accounts of Amerigo Vespucci, Hernán Cortés, and other early explorers of the Caribbean. Rumors of American Amazons continued to spread into sixteenth-century texts such as those of Pietro Martire d’Anghiera’s *De Orbe Novo* (1530), Giovanni Battista Ramusio’s *Navigazioni et viaggi* (1550–1559) and Francisco López de Gómara’s *Historia de la conquista de México* (1552). Soon, what had been limited to a classical period phenomenon from Asia Minor became most prominently associated with a new continent, and the transformation of a region in the minds of European readers had begun.

At the same time, also in the sixteenth century, there had been rumors in both Central and South America of a “país de la canela,” a mythical land of cinnamon, where spices and perhaps other natural treasures – even gold – were thought to abound. The idea of a “land of cinnamon” was particularly fueled by a specimen resembling Indian cinnamon (*Cinnamomum zeylanicum*) that was believed to exist in the eastern foothills of the Andes. On an expedition organized by Francisco de Orellana and Gonzalo Pizarro (half-brother of Francisco Pizarro) in 1540, Pizarro was determined to find this cinnamon land, as well as the domain of an indigenous warrior chieftain named “El Dorado,” who, it was believed, dipped himself each day in a lake of gold to impress his subjects and frighten his enemies. The early European mythmaking in the New World soon transferred the term “El Dorado” from the golden king to the capital of his realm, now also called “El Dorado.” The myth was sparked by cravings to discover yet another golden empire after the spectacular discoveries of the Aztec and Inca empires between 1519 and 1532. It was while attempting to find this city of gold that

Pizarro undertook the first European exploration of the Amazon River.<sup>1</sup> But more importantly for our purposes, his companion Orellana – through the voice of his Dominican chronicler, Fray Gaspar de Carvajal – propagated the legend of a community of unmarried women warriors living in isolation along the banks of the river. Carvajal claimed to have seen a group of bellicose women “who set about fighting in front of [their Indian subjects] as captains, so valiantly that the Indians did not dare to turn their backs” (127).<sup>2</sup> Carvajal’s seeming confirmation of the actual existence of the female warriors of European antiquity raises questions about the reliability of his text, which have for a long time determined its scholarly reception.

The following essay will take a new look at the mythical *mélange* that Carvajal’s and other early colonial texts present of life in the Amazon river region, descriptions that historical scholarship for a long time viewed as containing more affinity with medieval European fantasies about the Orient than any reference to a cultural region that would come to be called Amazonia several centuries later. This scholarly consensus has been challenged in recent years under the weight of new empirical evidence about the state of civilization in the wider Amazon basin.

For a long time much historical scholarship has relied almost exclusively on European forms of testimony. More recently, however, scholars have come to recognize that Amazonian travel narratives not only consisted of fictional tales of fantastic denizens of the New World, but often also integrated indigenous testimonies – and to some degree information about indigenous technologies and epistemologies – into their accounts. Administrative accounts and treatises in the Iberian tradition, for instance, often served to reveal the engagement of indigenous populations with their natural surroundings, albeit in subtle ways. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this occurred most frequently through the image of the Amerindian rower, a figure that occupied a place of technical prowess and dexterity in negotiating the elements of the river, but was almost always hidden within the folds of the European narrative. Native populations regularly served as a critical link between the material elements of the natural environment – the river, riverbanks, islands, wind, and rain – and the equally material world of European colonial culture: the production of missives, maps, sketches, annotations, and instrumentally aided observations. The same is true of the earliest reports of other Europeans in the Americas, as we will have occasion to see. These indigenous contributions to the practical exploration of new territories are not immediately evident within standard narratives of cultural contact and exchange. Europeans’ desire to portray themselves as intrepid adventurers and

1 With regard to the region’s early exploration, the Amazon basin was a zone of great interest to both Spain and Portugal. While Spanish explorers regularly descended the river from the West, Portugal had been granted provisional sovereignty over large swaths of the region east of longitude 42°W, according to the Treaty of Tordesillas (1494). Portuguese settlement along the equator prior to the eighteenth century was largely limited, as it would be for much of Brazil, to the coastal regions.

2 All translations from Carvajal’s narrative are mine. N.S.

heroic participants in a broader cultural narrative resulted in many indicators of native agency being deleted from their accounts. It is thus tempting to link these disarticulated native practices to what we know about the deeper past of environmental practices in tropical South America *beyond* the written records that proliferated after 1492. What is needed in order to arrive at a more realistic assessment of the indigenous populations' relationship to their natural environment is a correlation of both material (i.e., archaeological) and symbolic perspectives, of the scientific analysis of early modern ecological practices and a critically informed reading of the early colonial documents.<sup>3</sup>

The protagonistic role played by native peoples has often been buried within intrepid tales of European heroism, but an attentive rereading of classic accounts demonstrates their central place within the imaginary of historians and their possibly catalytic place in these longer, and therefore often authoritative, histories. To give an example: Robert Southey, in a short book that he argued should be seen as a subchapter of his multivolume *History of Brazil*, begins his story of "one of the strangest tragedies in American history" along the banks of the "river Orellana," where "a horde of Brazilian savages" was found fleeing toward the interior, away from the reach of the Portuguese arriving along the coast. The Brazilians were purported to have wandered for ten years within the Amazon basin, engaging with other native groups, including the Omaguas, whom they told of riches made of iron that they had earlier acquired from these Portuguese. The Omaguas, in turn, described "another nation [that] dwelt to the westward," which had given them weapons and armor laden with gold and precious jewels. Thus emerged, through an exchange between indigenous populations (and, according to Southey, two Portuguese who had accompanied them on their sojourn), the idea of unimaginable fortunes within the South American continent, and a clear invitation on the part of the Omaguas to bring these "white men with beards" to trade with their wealthy brethren. What is clear here is that the Brazilian "savages" serve as intermediaries between the Portuguese explorers and the Omaguas, facilitating cross-cultural information exchange across a wide swath of the South American interior (Southey 1–2).

## Cultural Landscapes of the Amazonian Holocene

While narratives like Southey's *History of Brazil* should be handled with care due to their secondary or even tertiary referentiality to what we may call Amazonian reality, historians can take advantage of the work of archaeologists who offer interpretations of nonscriptural materials that may help us reflect on the question of indigenous agency and understand how early interactions between nature and

3 On the presence of Amerindian laborers as rowers and mediators between the physical and metaphysical environments, see Neil Safier, "Subalternidade Tropical?" On the symbolic perspectives of Amazonian populations, see Philippe Descola, *Beyond Nature and Culture*.

culture could have occurred. Such an effort involves peeling back the historical layers well before 1492 and the first writings about the New World. It has now largely become a consensus among archaeologists of the neotropics<sup>4</sup> that “cultural forests” – cultivated anthropogenic landscapes rather than pristine or paradisiacal forests – proliferated in the Holocene period (i.e., the past 12,000 years) throughout the Amazon River Basin.<sup>5</sup> Through a careful material analysis of plant distribution, soil characteristics, stylistic features of pottery, geoglyphs (intentional anthropogenic landscape modifications), the presence of charcoal and pollen in the paleoecological record, and site locations of human domestic and mortuary remains, scholars have in the last decade or so argued convincingly that the native peoples of the tropical regions of South America proactively managed their local environments: planting trees, cultivating species, domesticating animals, and otherwise organizing their domestic lives in direct relationship with the forests that surrounded them. The archaeological revelation of dark earth deposits, known as *terra preta do índio*, has been especially important in showing the conscious manipulation of soils and organic materials in creating diverse agricultural and climatic conditions in the tropical regions of South America. In addition, evidence for human-induced dispersal of seeds and fruits has added weight to this discussion. These arguments contradict squarely and consciously the idea that there was a fixed and limited carrying capacity of the tropical forest, an idea that was enshrined in one of anthropology’s most influential twentieth-century reference works: the *Handbook of South American Indians*, edited by Julian Steward (669–772). Instead, as Anna Roosevelt, Eduardo Neves, Michael Heckenberger, and others have recently contended, the forest offered a much more malleable ecosystem than was previously understood to be the case. Consequently, the populations and levels of civilization were much higher – especially with respect to Andean and Mesoamerican cultures, once considered as source cultures for all other South American groups, including those of Amazonia – than theories of environmental determinism had maintained were possible.<sup>6</sup> They have shown that environment alone cannot determine the behavior or geographic distribution of the human species. As Clark Erickson writes:

4 The neotropic ecozone includes South and Mesoamerica, the Caribbean, and southern Florida. These regions share a common climate and are similar in terms of flora and fauna. The neotropic ecozone is thus largely identical with the earlier appellation Circum-Caribbean.

5 For one of the classical articulations of the “cultural forest” model, see William Balée, *Footprints of the Forest*.

6 Anna Roosevelt, *Moundbuilders of the Amazon*; Eduardo Neves; Michael Heckenberger; William Balée; Clark Erickson; Stephen Rostain. For the classic articulation of the environmental deterministic argument, see Betty Meggers, *Amazonia*.

Through their long-term historical transformation of the environment involving transplanting of plants and animals, selective culling of non-economic species and encouragement of useful species, burning, settlement, farming, agroforestry (forest management), and other activities [...] humans created what we recognize and appreciate as *nature* in Amazonia.<sup>7</sup>

Archaeological evidence supporting these theories is wide-ranging and diverse. In the central Amazon, Amazonian Dark Earth (ADE) sites, shell mounds, and ceramic complexes provide consistent material support for the theory of long-term landscape management by Amazonian hunter-gatherers in the Pleistocene and Holocene periods (i.e., between 28,000 and 11,000 years ago). These *terra preta* locations often contain anthropic soils with high levels of soil carbon and phosphorous. Frequently associated with the cultivation of bitter manioc and a labor-intensive process that requires the toasting and cooking of manioc flour, ADE sites are understood as evidence of a sedentary lifestyle and agricultural intensification (Arroyo-Kalin; Neves et al.). Evidence of the practice of ceramic crafts in these areas coincide with the construction of funerary mounds and ditches, all of which support the broader conclusion that these locations were heavily occupied, continuously settled, and exhibited significant anthropogenic alterations of the local environment (Neves and Petersen). In the Upper Xingu, too, historical elements of Kuikuro culture argue for seeing powerful interventions by Amazonian populations in their local surroundings. These material vestiges include manioc gardens, fish weirs, orchards, and grass fields used for thatch construction. Ceramic vessels related to manioc processing and cooking also show a high degree of technological sophistication (Heckenberger, Russell, Toney, Schmidt.)

But not all of this research argues narrowly that Amazonian populations were sedentary prior to the arrival of Europeans. Research in the Beni region, in present-day northeastern Bolivia, confirms the hypothesis that native Amazonians were in fact road-builders as well as landscape domesticators. According to Clark Erickson, “a vast network of raised earthen causeways and canals,” ranging in length from tens of meters to several kilometers, were constructed to connect “forest islands” where conditions for cultivation of foodstuffs and ritually important plants were favorable. The terrestrial and aquatic circulation that resulted from the series of canals and causeways was sufficient to devise an “integrated landscape of movement” that archaeological research is only now bringing to light (Erickson, “Agency” 218). In the Kuikuro communities of the Upper Xingu, there also appear to be large-scale networks of communication and exchange, which have been confirmed by the presence of significant road systems and earthen causeways. These have been referred to as “permanent plaza communities integrated in territorial polities” or “galactic clusters” that had gates, roads,

7 Clark Erickson, “Amazonia” 158. Such theories also have more contemporary applications. For the history of the Açaí palm on today’s global stage, see Eduardo S. Brondizio, *The Amazonian Caboclo and the Açaí Palm*. Other studies of anthropogenic landscape transformations include G.H. Shepard Jr. and H. Ramirez, “Made in Brazil.”

and secondary plazas, all of which were connected according to geometric principles (Heckenberger et al.) Such ancient projects, whether in Baures (present-day Bolivia) or Xingu (present-day Brazil), are evidence that indigenous populations in Amazonia adapted to the conditions of their environment – and adapted their environment in the process. In the words of one archaeologist, “[indigenous Amazonians] imposed their agency and structure on the environment through permanent and significant engineering” (Erickson, “Agency” 209).

This kind of landscape management also involved the domestication of species across broad swaths of the central Amazon region, including such fruit tree domesticates as the açai-do-Pará (*Euterpe oleracea*), burití (*Mauritia flexuosa*), pupunha (*Bactris gasipaes*), and tucumã (*Astrocaryum aculeatum*). What is more, the human dispersal of the castanha-do-Pará seed (also known as the Brazil nut, *Bertholletia excelsa*, in the *Lecythidaceae* family, which Dutch traders brought to Europe at the end of the eighteenth century) has been hypothesized as the primary motor by which the *Bertholletia* spread over vast stretches of territory during the Holocene (Shepard Jr. and Ramirez). One intriguing possibility is that Amazonian cacao, one of the most important agricultural products of the eighteenth-century Amazon, was itself domesticated by ancient Amazonian populations.<sup>8</sup> These transformations were taking place well before the arrival of Europeans, and continued to occur as Europeans navigated the river to garner knowledge about the New World’s newfound sources of wealth.

## Partial Truths: Reassessing Gaspar de Carvajal’s Travelogue

So what do we find if we reread early Amazonian narratives in the light of this more recent archaeological evidence? Most importantly, we find confirmation of what archaeologists have discovered because their reading of these accounts differed from those of cultural historians. One of the most important sources for archaeologists seeking support for their theories of a much more robust Amazonian presence prior to the arrival of Europeans is Gaspar de Carvajal’s travelogue *Relación del Descubrimiento del Río Grande de las Amazonas*.<sup>9</sup> Written in 1541/42 but not published until 1895, Carvajal’s account records a journey into an increasingly populated Amazonian basin, beginning with a long journey from Quito, across the Andes, and then southeast along the Rio Napo and the Rio Solimões into today’s Brazil. He and his companions traveled for many days without seeing a single settlement, eventually arriving at a place – in the heart of South America, assumed to be close to the present-day city of Manaus, Bra-

8 According to a recent article, molecular data suggest that some species of cacao in Amazonia may have been domesticated, but there remains insufficient proof to allow a firm conclusion to be drawn. See Clement et al. For other hypotheses, see Motamayor et al. and Cuatrecasas. On Amazonian cacao production in the colonial period, see Alden.

9 For a complete introduction to the text and its history, see Medina.

zil – where a single village was five leagues long (approximately twenty-eight kilometers). The second portion of Carvajal’s narrative is replete with the constant movement of people, coming and going, and population centers that stretch on as far as the eye can see – and sometimes beyond. His precise description has appealed to certain archaeologists because it tends to affirm their theory that there were large-scale settlements and quite massive populations when the Europeans first arrived. Yet Carvajal seems also to have been just as keen to portray the dangers and dramas that he and his men lived through. This may be at least in part owing to the conventions of the travelogue genre, which the *Relación del Descubrimiento* appears to observe. But absent from Carvajal’s report are the standard observations about uncivilized hordes intent on cannibalizing the expedition members. Although he did experience some episodes of violence, and even lost an eye through a misguided arrow, his narrative contains protoethnographic descriptions of the customs of the inhabitants of the Amazon that seem to resist the seductions of stereotyping. Of course, there is a risk in reading these accounts too literally, as any poststructuralist literary critic might warn, and archaeologists should be wary of too quickly leaping to assume that Carvajal was merely recounting what he saw with his own eyes (or eye). Early modern colonial documents, as many scholars have shown, are partially true (to paraphrase James Clifford): in addition to circulating ancient mythical stories, they also contain verifiable empirical information that can be used for the purposes of historical reconstruction.<sup>10</sup> Which is to say that there are new ways of reading these early accounts that might not have been readily available without the more recent discoveries that illuminate indigenous management of the forest. In the nineteenth century, when Carvajal’s narrative first entered public circulation, any suggestion that there had been vast and complex populations in the Amazon Basin before and during the European arrival simply would not have fit into what was then accepted historical knowledge. Carvajal’s testimony was thus relegated to the realm of fiction and myth – into the fanciful realm of El Dorado and the Amazons.

One of the obsessions hovering over Carvajal’s account is food – no surprise for someone who describes his own diet as that of belts and the soles of shoes “cooked with a few herbs” (108). Consequently, the main purpose of the Orelana and (Gonzalo) Pizarro expedition was to procure provisions. When the Indians finally appear as full-fledged actors in Carvajal’s narrative, at the moment of their first bona fide encounter with Europeans, they come “weighted down [*car-gadas*] with much food,” and Carvajal frequently refers to the abundant supplies of comestibles with which the local populations provided them. Manatees, partridges, many kinds of fish, along with roasted cats and monkeys, emerge as the fare of these first Europeans to document their forays into the realm of the

10 I am referring to Peter Hulme’s deconstruction of the complex rhetoric of colonial texts in *Colonial Encounters*, as well as Neil Whitehead’s meticulous and interdisciplinary reading of early colonial texts in his ethnographic studies of Amazonian culture (Whitehead, “Monstrosity”). See also Mackenthun.

Omaguas and beyond. That the native populations should have been excellent hunters of local wildlife would not strike anyone as out of the ordinary. “The Indians,” he writes, “did not cease to always bring us things to eat in abundant fashion, in the manner that the Captain [Orellana] had asked them” (112). We see here the justificatory structure of the official Crown report, showing Orellana in control of the situation and banishing indigenous agency to a subordinate function within a hierarchically organized cultural encounter.

But Carvajal’s descriptions of the villages through which they passed, and in which they occasionally stayed, reveals another element that can shed light on our knowledge of the productive technologies with which indigenous populations had organized their cultures for centuries and the large-scale urban networks that archaeologists have recently discovered to be characteristic of many lowland Amazonian groups. Narrating the conquistadores’ arrival in the province of the Omaguas, Carvajal mentions the “fruit of many kinds” that were to be found, and of the bounty of corn and yucca. At the junction of two major rivers, Carvajal claims to have seen “many very large settlements, and beautiful earth [there] that was very prolific” (121). In a settlement, owned by a man named Paguana, there were sheep from Peru – indicating cross-regional, indeed trans-Andean migrations of domestic animals – as well as vast quantities of cultivated crops: “[T]he land is very vibrant [*alegre*] and attractive [*vistosa*] and quite abundant in all sorts of food and fruits, such as pineapples and pears, which in the language of New Spain they called avocados, and *ciruelas* and guavas and many other kinds of tasty [*buenas*] fruits” (122).

The abundance of foodstuffs may speak to the prehuman biodiversity of the Amazon basin. But as we have seen from the above examples, early populations may also be somewhat responsible for this diversity and abundance. Laura Rival’s work on the Huaorani and the peach palm (*pupunha*) has shown that the Amazon is at least partially what it is today precisely because of “ancient management practices that have enriched its biodiversity” (78). The conditions that Europeans later found in the New World were engendered over the many previous centuries of indigenous management of the forest environment. This is especially important to recognize in the Amazonian context, since the region is often stereotyped not only as a “counterfeit paradise” by the followers of Betty Meggers and others in the earlier anthropological literature, but Amazonian populations are regularly portrayed as the archetype of a group that had little genuine involvement in handling their own affairs before Europeans arrived and began to create what they would subsequently call ‘civilization’ in the forest.<sup>11</sup> Indications of managed agricultural systems, which implies a much deeper relationship with forest ecology, can lead in the direction of a renewed interest in rewriting the history of a population that today still only makes headlines either because of its isolation from

11 The frequent denial in early modern texts on America of the indigenous practice of agriculture and horticulture is the ideological flip side of the humanist myth of the Golden Age. See Hulme, “The Spontaneous Hand of Nature,” and Mackenthun 265–73.

modern society or of being in the way of neocolonial resource exploitation projects (e.g., gold mining, logging, dam building).

In one of the same villages that Carvajal described, he also referred to “ceramics of different kinds [...], plates and other containers [...] of the best quality that could be found anywhere” (132). He comments on the “drawings and paintings” that are worked as they would be “in Rome,” and refers to “idols sewn from feathers [...] that frightened us [because of their] giant stature.” These references to ancient classical European civilizations may have been an attempt to make this curious civilization that had been found at the heart of the South American continent more easily understood by a monarch on the other side of the ocean. As Carvajal himself admits at several points throughout his narrative, it was hard to communicate with these populations because of the Spaniards’ own poor command of the native languages. But it is also clear, these many years after, that Carvajal may have borne witness to what scholars only five hundred years later are finally beginning to grasp: the cultural complexities and deep millennia-old engagements of Amazonian peoples with their environment.

## Conclusion

Ceramic production, earthen causeways, and subsistence agriculture are only some of the features that have been revealed in the past several decades by archaeologists seeking deeper explanations about the physical history of the greater Amazon river basin. All bespeak a profound participation in the transformation of the Amazonian landscape, with links to the deep and more recent past. The insights of landscape archaeology – applied in principle to nonscriptural communities or those where no written fragments remain – provide assistance in studying the nexus between these aspects of material culture and the broader social and cultural interactions they produced. There is certainly no reason that archaeologists’ spatialized, relational definitions of landscape and their nonscriptural discoveries in the field cannot inform the work of historians who, *pace* Foucault, are performing an archaeology of knowledge in a material vein.<sup>12</sup> By using archaeological evidence to reflect on native Amazonians’ attitudes toward nature, it is possible to give voice to some of their activities in a way that traditional European narratives do not.

We know, of course, that European knowledge was unquestionably biased, and have seen that Carvajal (being hungry) seems to have been particularly focused on the foodstuffs provided to him by the native populations along the Amazon. But we also see that it is possible that his observations provide us access to knowledge about patterns of indigenous behavior that is otherwise lost to us and that can help us understand these encounters more clearly than they have been

12 On the contested notion of landscape, see Ashmore and Knapp.

in the past. Witness the famous British geographer Clements Markham, who, unaware or incredulous of Carvajal's testimony, wrote over a century ago that the native populations of the Amazon that were "fierce and naked hunters" someday "may become thriving and happy agriculturists, increasing, peopling the fertile districts which are now uninhabited, and humanizing each other by the influence of social and domestic ties" (Ixiii). If Carvajal can be seen as a credible attestant – and the jury is still out on this point – we may be able to reread his narrative to corroborate a deeper history that is only now coming to light. It may be going too far to talk of indigenous 'technology' vis-à-vis the increased biodiversity around what were purportedly large-scale settlements, but at the very least we should raise the question of what 'technology' is and who has the privilege of applying the term to their activities.

As I have shown, knowledge about the cornucopian food culture of the Amazonian Indians was lost in colonial times for two reasons: first, Carvajal's account did not begin to circulate until the late nineteenth century; and second, his description of the natives' diversified diet and advanced ceramic skills contradicted the ideological consensus among historians. While recent archaeological discoveries suggest that Carvajal was not as much what eighteenth-century critics referred to as a "travel liar" (Adams) as was heretofore assumed, his narrative – now finally recovered from oblivion – may in turn provide scientists with valuable botanical and geographical information. Not least, we may now be certain that the Amazon Basin was inhabited by ecologically skilled people long before, as well as during, the arrival of Europeans.

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**GERMAN COLONIALISMS:  
TEXTS, TERRITORIES, AND  
SOCIAL BELONGING**



## CHAPTER THREE

# “Who Holds the Right to the Land?” Narratives of Colonization in Baltic- German and Estonian Literatures<sup>1</sup>

LIINA LUKAS

Ein Land finden, wo es Honig gab, den man gegen Kleinigkeiten tauschte, war zu der Zeit, da unsre Vorfahren nicht Zucker, Thee, Kaffe kannten [...] eine Entdeckung, die mehr werth war als Martinike, Domingo und Jamaika mit allen ihren Kaffebäumen und Zuckerpflanzen. (Findeisen 14)<sup>2</sup>

Thus wrote Friedrich Gotthilf Findeisen in his *Lesebuch für Ehst- und Livland* in 1787 about his new homeland in Livonia (Livland), where he moved from Leipzig. Findeisen’s exemplary passage takes us right into the German colonial discourse of the late eighteenth century which regarded Old Livonia (“Alt-Livland”), the territory constituting today’s Estonia and Latvia, as “the only – if not transoceanic, nevertheless transmarine – colony Germany has ever had” (Kohl 20).

European postcolonial studies do not always recognize the history of the Baltic countries as a significant part of European colonial history. In fact, Old Livonia was the oldest European colony – and it was also a German one. Over time, the colonial situation altered its form in response to the changing political situation in the region. In the end, this colonialism, at least in a political sense, proved to be a colonial fantasy or a wishful dream of those who saw themselves as colonialists. Nevertheless, the colonial experience formed the national and cultural identities of the area. And this colonial experience, real or imaginary, is articulated in literary texts – specifically, the historical novel – both in German and in the Estonian/Latvian languages. On the other hand, the texts not only react, they also act, helping to form reality, playing a crucial role in the processes of nation building.

1 The research for and writing of this article was supported by the Estonian Science Foundation grant ETF9178.

2 “Encountering a land where honey existed which could be traded for small amenities was – at a time when our forefathers did not know of sugar, tea and coffee – a discovery worth more Martinique, Saint Domingue and Jamaica with all their plants of coffee and sugar.” This and all other translations are, if not indicated otherwise, by the author.

The comparative examination of Estonian and/or Latvian literatures and Baltic-German literature<sup>3</sup> has so far remained more of a whim of a few researchers exploring the margins of their discipline than an approach that is considered valid and commonly accepted. But conducting such a joint examination proves to be especially productive in the light of postcolonial theories that proceed from the understanding that there is no clear-cut opposition between the colonizer and the colonized, but rather that they are interdependent, comprising two sides of the same coin of colonialism.

My contribution examines the ways in which the colonizing of Livonia is represented in Baltic-German and Estonian historical novels in the late nineteenth century. The colonizing act (in the aftermath of the Second Crusade) is a key occurrence in the cultural memory of both nations – for the Baltic-Germans, the colonizers, it is the moment of the establishment of their existence; in the Estonian collective memory, it means the battles for and the loss of the ‘ancient freedom’, i.e., their independence from outside forces. It is no wonder that both the Estonian and Baltic-German historical novel start with the depiction of this crucial event. While substantively different in their ideologies, both national narratives actually have the same roots. Before specifying them, I will take a look at German colonialism in the Baltic region more particularly.

### **“Das ist ja ganz wie in Amerika”: The Beginnings of German Colonialism**

Kouflute waren gesezzen  
 Riche und vormezzen  
 An eren und an gute.  
 Den quam in ir gemute,  
 als noch vil mancher tut.  
 Got der wisete sie dar an,  
 daz sie gewunnen einen man,  
 dem vremde lant waren kunt.  
 Der brachte sie zu einer stunt  
 Mit schiffen uf die Osterse.

3 “Baltic-German literature” refers to literature written in German by German authors who lived in Livonia (Livland), Estonia (Estland), or Couronia (Kurland), the territory of today’s Estonia and Latvia. Baltic-Germans never made up more than 6% of the total but they dominated the political, cultural, and economic life of this region until 1918 when the nation-states of Estonia and Latvia were proclaimed. German was the official and cultural language until 1918; subsequently, it remained one of the minority languages in the new sovereignties. In 1939 the Baltic-Germans, following the signing of the Hitler-Stalin Pact, were resettled by the German government in the Warthegau (a territory in occupied Poland) under the ‘Heim ins Reich’ program. In 1945 most of those residents were moved to a locality in what is today’s Germany.

Waz sal ich da von sagen me.  
 (Livländische Reimchronik, 1291–98)<sup>4</sup>

German colonial history began with the conquest of Livonia at the beginning of the thirteenth century in the aftermath of the Livonian Crusade (1198–1227),<sup>5</sup> proclaimed by Innocentius III and initiated by the archbishop of Hamburg-Bremen. The German crusaders and the colonists who followed them met with the resistance of the inhabitants of these territories: first from the Livs, after whom they named the land, then the Latgalians and Curonians in the southern part of the region, which formed the nucleus of modern Latvia, and, finally, the Estonians in the north. As we can read in the old Livonian Chronicles, this occupation had more than just a religious purpose. Some recent papers on medieval studies in Estonia have drawn on the writings of James Brundage, who compared the Spanish colonization of the Americas with the subjugation of Livonia, mainly because the policies and practices were first tested in Livonia. The colonization of Livonia thus provided a structural model for European overseas colonialism, an important facet of the argument in favor of a postcolonial approach to Baltic history.

Another reason to review colonialism in the Baltic region is its colonial self-consciousness. Since the eighteenth century, Baltic-German culture recognized itself as a colonial one. Even in the twentieth century, Arthur Behrsing begins his *Grundriss einer Geschichte der baltischen Dichtung* (1928) by identifying Livonia as “the only real colony of the Holy Roman Empire” (Behrsing 3).

The period of coloniality persisted for over seven hundred years, altering its form over the course of time due to the changing political background and Germany’s diminishing political authority in the region. Colonial situations are typically characterized by the dependency on the ‘mother country’; and since the mid-sixteenth century, and after the collapse of the authority of the Livonian branch of the Teutonic Order, Estonia and Livonia had only Germany as an ideological model: German was the language of education, and cultural patterns were borrowed from Germany. And although Germany had no explicit political or economic interests in the Baltic, which in the seventeenth century was a Swedish colony and in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries a colony of the Russian Empire, thanks to a special political status negotiated by the Baltic-Germans with Peter I, these areas were able to maintain their remarkable municipal autonomy and economic independence under the local authority of the Baltic-German nobility. Hence, German colonialism in the Baltic countries was in most respects cultural, limited to ambitions of imitating and holding on to a German culture and way of life.

4 Established merchants, rich and prominent in honor and wealth, had decided to seek profit from trade, as many still do today. God led them to employ a man who knew of foreign lands and straight away he brought them by ship to the Baltic Sea. What more should I say?

5 Concerning the Livonian Crusades, see Tamm/Kaljundi/Selchjensen; Brundage, *The Crusades*; Fonnesberg-Schmidt.

In the mid-nineteenth century, Germany's interest in *Ostsiedlung* began to grow, a development considered to be a direct result of German colonial experiences in the Baltic region (see Plath 280, 283). In the political sense, however, German colonialism in the Baltic remained wishful thinking: As soon as political aspirations related to the mother country were revealed, e.g., the hope of creating a Baltic Duchy with Germany's help at the end of WWI, this form of colonialism met with opposition because of Germany's indifference. However, this does not mean that we should not investigate the colonial situation particular to the Baltic.

Without elaborating too much on the specific features of the Baltic case compared with other colonial situations (e.g., in Africa), I want to stress that until the early twentieth century Baltic society lived under a form of domination in which the demarcation between social strata was a national one: the dominant, privileged group consisted of Baltic-Germans, and the subordinate class consisted of Estonians and Latvians, who experienced their plight as 'seven centuries of slavery'.

The establishment of nation states in 1918 gave Estonians – who had been labeled *Undeutsche* by the Germans – agency in both a political and a cultural sense: it granted them not only the right to vote, but also the right to their own history, which up to this point had been written by others. The voice of these others was more audible not only because of the political influence of the ruling social group, but also because of the range the German language exercised, both politically and academically. This inequality was further emphasized by the dominance of German in the written sphere, which also reinforced the dominant group's views of history.

The written sources originating from this area reflected very little of the Estonian position. Although the Estonian written language had already begun to materialize in the mid-sixteenth century, it was initially created by German pastors to foster the colonial enterprise and to enforce subordination. The Estonians passed on their subaltern perspectives from generation to generation in the form of oral traditions. This oral culture became a part of the written culture in the nineteenth century when ethnologists, linguists, and folklorists started to record it, in an attempt to reconstruct lost voices. Its authenticity, however, could only be a matter of speculations – or fiction. Yet, this fiction was loaded with ideological (and political) significance: as a 'public transcript' (a term coined by James C. Scott), Estonian voices and perspectives on Estonian history became official with the birth of the Estonian Republic in the second and third decades of the twentieth century, when historians began to consider more seriously archaeological, ethnographic, and folkloristic sources. During the short twenty-year existence of the Estonian Republic in the early twentieth century, Estonian historiography and self-representation were established, which also sustained Estonian national identity during the fifty years of Soviet colonialism that followed.<sup>6</sup>

6 For a postcolonial analysis of the Soviet and post-Soviet era in Estonia, see Annus.

## A Story of Settlement or Conquest? Estonian and Baltic-German Paradigms in Historiography and Literature

Problems of Estonian historiography need to be considered against the background of the country’s postcoloniality: it has until now used two paradigms – the Estonian and the Baltic-German – which are marked by rhetorical (metaphorical, poetical) or narratological means as “metahistorical gestures above history,” as described by the Estonian historian and literary scholar Jaan Undusk. Distinctions between historiographies of one and the same country written in different languages underline the metaphorical character of all historical writing: Clio is a poet, too!<sup>7</sup> Even for a historian, history is not simply factual; it is always related to the narrative means of the current historiographical discourse, as well as those of the individual, familial, cultural, and ethnic memory of the historian, which taken together form the basis of his or her interpretation of history. Or, quoting Undusk again, “History is always a moral summary of the present” (Undusk 116).

One of the cardinal elements in Baltic history, whose interpretation always, unerringly, shows the paradigm of the historiographer, is the colonization of Old Livonia in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The question is whether during this period the land was settled and civilized or colonized and enslaved. Baltic historiography has not yet been able to treat these events without metahistorical gestures.<sup>8</sup> And I am afraid that such gestures cannot be avoided even in this article.

The historical novel is a genre that allows Clio, history’s muse, to engage in flights of imagination without fear of being reprimanded. Historical novels tend to instrumentalize history in the interest of creating a national identity. The genre was born in the nineteenth century to meet the need for national identity narratives; it is the symbolic form of the idea of the nation state (Moretti 17). Regarding relations with the land, intense identification with a particular territory is the cornerstone of the very idea of a nation state, and the history of the settlement of that territory is an essential part of the historical narrative.

However, what is presented as a settlement story in Baltic-German literature is one of subjection in Estonian literature. The victorious history of conquest in Baltic-German literature – the triumph of culture, religion, and German morals, the salvation of the land from savagery and paganism – is in Estonian literature portrayed as a heroic fight against foreign conquerors (first set out in the novels of Eduard Bornhöhe and Andres Saal). The tensions between conquerors and conquered are, however, not clear-cut: Estonian literature at the end of the nineteenth

7 I here refer to the German translation of White’s influential study *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism*, which in German reads *Auch Klio dichtet oder die Fiktion des Faktischen. Studien zur Tropologie des historischen Diskurses* (Stuttgart 1991).

8 However, the recently published volume on the medieval history of Estonia, *Eesti ajalugu II. Eesti keskaeg* (2012) moves toward uniting these two paradigms and has thus earned much criticism from the Estonian public.

century props its historical narrative up against the very first Baltic-German historical short story, “Wannem Imanta” (1802), written by the Baltic-German journalist and Enlightenment writer Garlieb Merkel (1769–1850). Since Baltic-German historical fiction flourished – along with the boom of the German historical novel in the 1880s – the historical story told by Merkel was pushed aside, forced to the periphery of cultural memory.

The Estonian historical novel was revived in the 1930s (for example, by Enn Kippel and Mait Metsanurk) together with the establishment of the Estonian paradigm of the Baltic historiography which do not tell the story of the territory’s settlement but rather of its conquest.

### **Henry’s Story: The First Chronicle of the Livonian Colonization**

The story of Livonia’s colonization was first narrated in *The Chronicle of Henry of Livonia*, which is the earliest known text from this region, written between 1224 and 1227 by a missionary and priest called Henricus, whose origins lay in the vicinity of Magdeburg. His text is a recounting of the usurping of the land, sacralized as *terra mariana*, Marienland or Mary’s Land, thereby legitimating the events as a ‘Holy War’, which included “leading [...] Estonians, Livonians and Latvians under the yoke of the Lord” – words used by Henry in several chapters of these annals (IX 13, X 13). The *Chronicle* also represents the first occasion in which missionary activities are directly linked to territorial conquest (Brundage, “Livonian Crusade” 8, see also Tyerman): “Certainly, through the many wars that followed, the pagans were to be converted and, through the doctrine of the Old and New Testament, they were to be told how they might attain to the true Peacemaker and eternal life” (IX, 14).

This is a model of thought common to Christian imperialism – the conviction that Europeans (read: Christians) are in possession of the absolute and ultimate religious truth to which all people have to submit and for which they must instantly abandon their own religion.

The aim of this conquest was to plant a new vineyard for the Lord even if its accomplishment was at the cost of brandishing fire and sword.<sup>9</sup> Henry’s descriptions of the battles display a passion for fighting and cruelty worthy of the Old Testament:

When we arrived there, we divided our army among all the roads, villages, and provinces of that land. We burned and devastated everything, killed all the males, captured the women and children, and drove off their horses and many flocks. We assembled at last at the big village of Loal, which is a stream in the midst of the land. Resting there for three

9 Concerning the rhetoric and ideology developed to legitimate and justify a crusade to a region lacking a prior Christian history, see Tamm.

days, we laid waste to all the land round about and got up to the villages of the Revalians. [...] The Rigans returned with joy to Livonia and in brotherly love divided everything that they brought back. (*Chronicle* XX 2)

Violence was justified in the name of Jesus Christ. However, while Henry still called things by their true name, in the later Baltic-German historiography, which was often based on his work, Christians (Germans) never ravaged and looted, burned or killed – these horrible deeds were only ascribed to the pagan Estonians or Livonians. Christians simply defended their castles or repelled attacks. This wording constitutes the historiographer’s metahistorical gesture above history. As far as Henry understood, the conquered land belonged to the Virgin Mary. Its conquerors were simply carrying out God’s will and were nothing more than His tools.

But Henry also differentiated among the Christians – the instrument of God’s will in Livonia was a German bishop, who had more extensive rights to the land than, for example, the Christian Danes, Swedes, or Russians who had come to the country with similar intentions. By casting lots, Estonia was divided into three parts: two-thirds were shared between two bishops, and the remaining third went to the warrior brothers of the Order, lured to Livonia by promises from the bishop of Livonia of land, privileges, and the plenary remission of sins. Benefices were in fact granted even before the land had been conquered – for “just as their numbers and labors increased, so ought their possessions and goods increase” (XI 3).

Thus, the Christianization of territory inevitably led to confiscation of property. Only Christians could own land and pagans were not recognized as legal subjects. Henry quoted Estonians who had asked that the land be left to them, but he refused to acknowledge that Estonians had such rights. The arrogation of Livonian landholdings by Christians was symbolically emphasized through denomination: the subjugated villages and strongholds were endowed with either new – Christian – names, or else old forms were changed to comply with German spelling and usage. The newly converted Estonians were themselves also given new names. The founding action of Christian imperialism is a christening, *la cérémonie de nomination* (see Greenblatt 83; Todorov 35). Thereby, the conquest of the land was coupled with the conversion of souls using renaming or baptizing as its rhetorical device.

According to the Christian order of the world, local people and their customs and practices were treated as hostile, pagan curiosities that had to be reshaped according to the Christian model. Pagans were not different from Christians *within* that cultural system – they were not part of the cultural system at all. Morals and values could appertain only to Christians since the pagans, according to Henry, were immoral. Throughout the *Chronicle*, Henry used such expressions as deceitful, sly, treacherous, stupid, evil-thinking, tricky, perfidious, sanguinary,

bland, rebels, and brood of vipers to describe the locals. He took particular pains to point out their mendacity as well as their pride, one of the deadly sins.

Henry shows the Estonians, who were the fiercest opponents of the Christian crusaders in the Baltic region, in an especially unfavorable light, calling them “apostate peoples” (XXVII 2), who refused to retreat. Battles with the Estonians continue until the last pages of his *Chronicle*, where he complains that they “still held up their heads and would obey neither the Germans nor other nations” (XVI 8). “But the sons of pride should become sons of obedience,” he pontificates (XXX 5), because newly baptized people must be humble, patient, and poor (XXIX 3). “The Lord thus quieted their pride and humbled the arrogance of the strong” (XV 3).

Kaupo, Elder of the Livs, having accepted the Christian faith along with the values and moral convictions of the Germans, is the only character in the *Chronicle* painted in a positive and favorable light. He is “the very faithful Caupo, who never neglected the Lord’s battles and expeditions” (XXI 2), and who “gave up the spirit in a sincere confession of the Christian religion” (XXI 2) after dividing all his goods and possessions among the (Christian) churches established in Livonia (XXI 4).

## The Colonization Narrative in Baltic-German Historical Fiction

The act of colonizing Old Livonia is the bedrock of Baltic-German identity. This act needs to be constantly confirmed and consolidated. Initially this confirmation was provided by the idea of the Christian mission, and then by fortifying Lutheran protestantism. Later, it developed into a secularized form, namely the intention of civilizing the land, of bringing ‘culture’ to it. In the colonial discourse created in the eighteenth century, the pagan warriors of Henry’s *Chronicle* became exotic savages (see Plath 274). At the end of the nineteenth century, this sentiment ultimately transitioned into the national struggle for preserving and maintaining the German outpost in the East, which was not only an outgrowth of the pressure of Russification, but was also a component of the imperial ambitions of Emperor Wilhelm II’s Germany. The question “Who holds the right to the land?” became the fundamental issue for national self-determination (Lukas, *Baltisaksa kirjandusväli*, 234ff). Manor owner Ernst Kasimir von Dohlen, a character in the 1907 novel *Elkesragge* by Max Alexander von der Ropp (1876–1940), drives this point home by declaring, “These forests, they have to be mine and they have to remain there for my descendants” (4). But the characters in the novel fight not only for ownership of the manor. The struggle for territory is also a struggle to preserve culture – “the battle for 700 years of history, for our German culture” (180). This was the mission of the Baltic nobility after the end of the era of chivalry. The motto of this struggle was borrowed from the much admired Wilhelm II, who had declared: “We, the Germans are the salt of the earth”

(180–182); the Baltic version became, “My aim is to show the people that we are the lords of this land” (Ropp 200)! In German-Baltic novels the region’s history prior to German settlement is often depicted as a steady decline of the ethnic people, presented by an intellectual of either Latvian or Estonian descent to lend credence to this claim. In the novel *Licht, mehr Licht!* (1885) by Elfriede Jaksch (1847–1897), it is a Germanized Latvian, Erwin Schmidt, who narrates the story of the downfall of the Latvian people, due to endless quarrels with their neighbors. Their enslavement by the Germans is the logical cause of this ruin. Despite his feelings toward his grandmother’s kin, Erwin considers himself a German and cannot see a national future for the Latvians, who, as he puts it, are a perishing nation with no possibilities of progress.

The German conquest of the land is rationalized in the novel by portraying the Estonians and the Latvians as themselves colonizers of the territory, having earlier dislodged the Goths, who were of German origin. That Baltic-German culture is consistent with Gothic culture becomes the literary justification for German colonization. The 1911 short story “Darthe Semmit” by Frances Külpe (1863–1936) attempts to convince its readers of the truth of this assertion by describing archaeological excavations that prove the presence of Gothic settlements some twelve hundred years ago (Külpe 189–280). *Elkesragge*, von der Ropp’s novel, presents the settlement myth in the following terms:

Seven hundred years ago, when the Germans came to the land, the Kure people lived here, a Finnish tribe that was gradually pushed out and assimilated. Latvians lived further south. It was Germans alone that brought Latvian peasants to the territory, and you can be sure there would not be a single Latvian here if we, the Germans, had not invited them. (Ropp 197–198)

Lotta Girgensohn’s (1869–1941) settlement novel *Ylo, Kaupos Sohn und Hans von Tiesenhusen. Erzählungen aus der Zeit von Rigas Gründung* (1901) positions the idealized Kaupo in opposition to his son Ylo, who is torn between his pagan mother and the father he secretly admires. Kaupo achieved his high position in the social hierarchy of the narrative because he adopted Christianity and its moral codes. He became an educated and respected knight who traveled extensively in Germany, where he admired the country’s well-organized life:

He was surprised by the sublime splendor of the churches and monasteries [...]. He contemplated the wealth of the prudent merchants in the cities, the grandeur of tournaments in noble castles, the safely closed guilds of craftsmen. Everything was well organized, a mighty whole. His spirit longed more and more for a similar state for his own people, and for that, he believed, he needed the help, education and religion of Germans. (Girgensohn 145)

Kaupo's tribesman Viezo, having likewise received the sacrament of baptism, also reveres the German mindset, religion, and manner, acknowledging their superiority. And he is grateful for the German presence: "Just come, ye Germans, come to our Livonia, you deserve to be made room for" (135). The fidelity and humility of Germans is contrasted with the meanness and slyness of the Livs, and only the influence of the Germans can instill morality in the local population. The novel illustrates this tale of moral education with a Livs girl, Tiiu, who lives in the German castle, and there develops into an exemplary German mistress, worthy of becoming engaged to a knight. Facing each other in a decisive battle, both Kaupo the father and Ylo the son fall, symbolically leaving neither subjection nor resistance as the winner. The novel concludes with the baptism of Ylo's son, Anno, and it is through the underlying rhetoric of the act of christening Anno, the new elder of the Livs, that ownership of and rights to the land are decided.

Girgensohn's novel was written to celebrate the seven hundredth anniversary of the establishment of the city of Riga (1201) and contained a message to its contemporaries: Bishop Albert's<sup>10</sup> wish had been to erect the city of Riga as "a stronghold of German customs, religion and our economy," (64) and the citizens were to continue Albert's mission, "Fighting the wild aborigines and the hard nature of Livonia, my children should be gladly aware of their German mission and disseminate German customs and ways" (65).

As the twentieth century progressed, the instrumental significance of the Baltic-German novel in nationalistic ideology increased.

## The Story of the Ancient Fight for Freedom

Let us return to Henry's *Chronicle*. Rereading the text against its grain in order to find possibilities for giving voice to the colonized subaltern subjects, a slightly different point of view can be found, hidden among the author's ideology and rhetoric. For example, when Henry muses, "But to the extent that the joy of the Christians was increased, so the multitude of the pagans was made sorrowful and confused" (VIII 3), he seems to have felt empathy toward the conquered people. To a certain degree, he even admired them, admitting that the pagans fought courageously against their enemies (XV 3). He compared them with the Philistines by using the biblical reference, "Take courage and fight, ye Philistines, lest you come to be servants to the Hebrews" (X 10). Updating the sentiment, he urges them on in both direct speech – "Take heart and fight, Livonians, lest you be slaves to the Germans" (XVI 4) – and indirect observation: "They would never hereafter accept the Christian faith so long as a boy a year old or a cubit high remained in the land" (XXVI 9).

10 Albert (von Buxhoeveden), the Canon of Bremen, was Livonian Bishop from 1199 to 1229.

Thus, Henry’s *Chronicle* made it possible to interpret the conquest of Livonia from the viewpoint of the conquered – as the local peoples’ fight for freedom, a fight drowned in blood. Such an interpretation emerged with the Reformation (in the context of the critical discourse on the Catholic Church and its atrocities) and assumed a secularized form during the Enlightenment, thus starting to question the moral legitimacy of Livonia’s colonization.

“None of the ecclesiastical orders brought Enlightenment to Europe or favored its spread,” avowed Johann Gottfried Herder in his *Outlines of a Philosophy of the History of Man* (593–94). In the chapter that deals with the history and nature of the nations around the Baltic Sea, Herder states:

Humanity shudders at the blood that was here spilled in long and savage wars, until the ancient Prussians were nearly extirpated, and the Courlanders and Latvians reduced to a state of slavery, under the yoke of which they still languish. Perhaps centuries will pass before it is removed, and these peaceful people are recompensed for the barbarities, with which they were deprived of land and liberty, by being humanely formed anew to the use and enjoyment of an improved freedom. (*Outlines* 338–39)

The notion that the history of the land be considered from the perspective of its ‘savage’ inhabitants might be attributable to Herder, who regarded empathizing with the Other’s viewpoint as a precondition for understanding history: in the words of Herderian hermeneutics, “Feel your way into everything – only then will you be on your way to understanding the world” (*Another Philosophy* 24). In order to understand the past or other nations one has to become accustomed to their way of thinking. Only by empathizing with others can the gulf separating us from the past be crossed.

One of the architects of the Herderian criticism of the conquest of Baltic countries was the parson of the parish of Laiuse, Heinrich Johann von Jannau (1753–1821), whose historiographical work, *Geschichte der Sklaverey und Charakter der Bauern in Lief- und Ehistland* (Riga 1786), refers to the Christianization of the Baltic region as its “conversion by the sword” (15): “So the knights of the order, priests as they were in fact, obliged to preach and save souls, turned into tormentors, taking the land from the people they were to instruct, and barbarians those coming to Livonia to preach their faith in Jesus” (35).

Throughout the age of Enlightenment, the history of the Baltic countries was increasingly interpreted as a colonial history that evidenced the mercantile spirit of the conquerors and brought the practice of slaveholding to the populations they subdued (e.g., in Findeisen; see also, Plath 274).

The Herderian view of the Christian colonization finds an ardent supporter in the person of Garlieb Merkel, the Baltic-German writer not only considered the inaugurator of Baltic-German historical fiction, but who also demanded the abolition of serfdom in Russia:

At a time when even the proud Briton struggles to give freedom and civil rights to his Negro slaves, there exist whole nations in Europe – declared to be incapable of dealing with personal freedom and the pursuit of happiness – that bend their backs under the harshest form of despotism, that rattle around the graves of their free forefathers in the chains of slavery, that plough the fields of a race foreign to their own, while themselves almost stricken to death by hunger. And who is it that pushes them to the ground? Dukes? No, my fellow citizens. Sacrificed by the greed of a few noble-men, the Latvians and Estonians come out last in the line of nations [...] until one day they declare their rights by fire and sword and with the blood of their despots. (Merkel, *Die Letten* 3–4)

Merkel's book, *Die Letten, vorzüglich in Liefland am Ende des philosophischen Jahrhunderts* (1797), opens a new epoch in the interpretation of the history of the Baltic countries because for the first time that history is presented directly from the subaltern point of view. It is Merkel who calls the history of the Estonians, Livs, and Latvians that began with the invasion of crusaders “the 600-year-period of slavery.” Merkel praises the glorious past of the Estonians and Livs before the arrival of the German militants, their ancient fight for freedom, and their brave resistance against forced Christianization:

With a sword in his hand he [the Estonian] moved toward the invading bandits facing their insidiousness with his hard and tenacious consistency. And as soon as he had a favorable opportunity, he rebelled powerfully against the yoke imposed on him and wrecked it. (Merkel, *Die Vorzeit* 259)

In Merkel's treatment the crusaders become “the fanatic foreign horde” (Merkel, *Wannem*, foreword n.p.), who robbed the local population of their land and freedom. Starting with Merkel, the history of this region could no longer be read as the story of settlement – it had turned into a story of conquest.

Merkel's attitude toward the colonization of Marienland is evident in the bold metaphoric language of his 1802 historical novel *Wannem Ymanta* (*Elder Ymanta*):

Iron monsters rose from the sea [...] like poisonous fog decomposing and killing everything on its way they spread all over the land. Fooling us with their wicked hypocrisy and bigotry they creep into our strongholds and villages. [...] Like predators [...] they smash our altars, plunder our fields of its crop, abuse our wives and daughters, take our children across the sea. [...] Like a fire kindled from a tiny spark and growing into a flame, then into a bright blaze swallowing one tree after another until the sea of fire is surging over the forest, scorching and killing even its last oak [...] so the sword of the foreigners is raging to abase its victim to serfdom. (25–27)

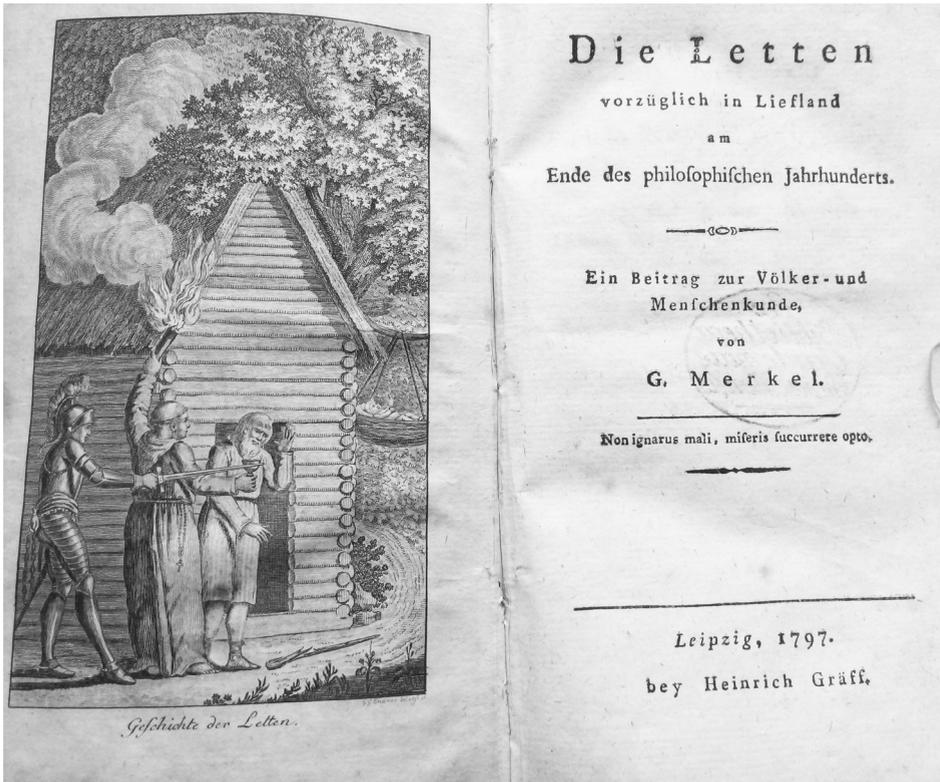
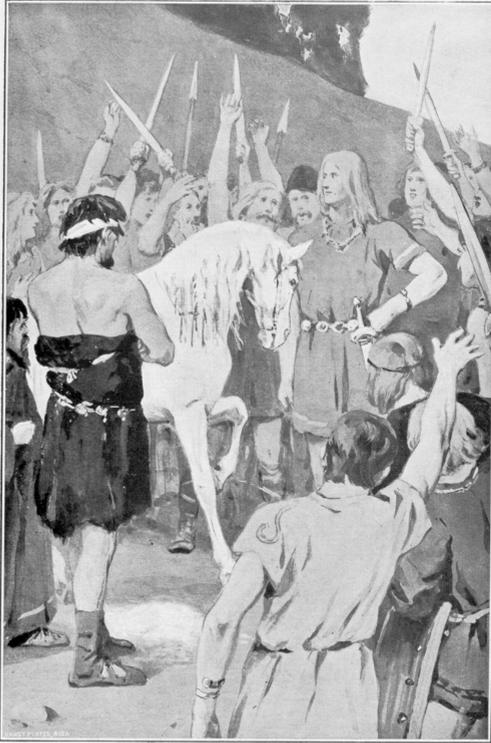


Fig. 1: Frontispiece of Garlieb Merkel, *Die Letten, vorzüglich in Liefland, am Ende des philosophischen Jahrhunderts. Ein Beytrag zur Völker- und Menschenkunde* (1797).

Merkel’s novel, rich in Ossianic sentiments, narrates the story of a campaign of the pagan Letgals and Livs – led by their respective elders Ymanta and Aazo – against the German knights. During the siege of Riga, knights cunningly plot to lure Ymanta into a deadly battle with his turncoat brother Kaupo, who is depicted here, contrary to Henry’s *Chronicle*, as a traitor. Both brothers are killed, plunging their lands and people into long centuries of serfdom. Thus, Merkel’s Livonian tale ends not in victory but in enslavement: “In despair the Livonian people fled, and the sword of the aliens raged among their fleeing throng” (*Wannem* 182). Merkel empathizes (in Herder’s sense) with the defeated and calls these events a historical injustice, demanding that the Livonian nobility guarantee dignity and independence to individuals as well as the nation as a whole.

The Herder-Merkel Romantic myth of a glorious past of subaltern people was widespread among Baltic-German intellectuals in the early nineteenth century, when it aligned itself with the Decembrist revolt in Russia. Later, it becomes associated with a critical, heretical opposition to a mainstream understanding of history, portraying, for example, the heroic fight of Aazo, an Estonian elder, against the German knights, in the novel *Aazo und Linda. Eine Geschichte aus*



Hazo wird zum Fürsten der Eiven gewählt.

Fig. 2:  
Ludmilla von Rehren, *Aazo und Linda. Geschichte aus Livlands Vergangenheit* (1902).

*Livlands Vergangenheit* (1902) by the Baltic-German author from Saaremaa, Ludmilla von Rehren (1875–1927). This is another novel that recounts the Estonians' ancient fight for freedom, also featuring Kaupo's brother, Aazo, as the protagonist who organizes the resistance against the Christian crusaders. While Lotta Girgensohn's 1901 novel, with Kaupo as the principle character, had used two opposing locations – a German castle and a Livonian stronghold – and presented Germans and Livonians as inveterate enemies, the plot of von Rehren's novel takes place entirely within the Estonian and Livonian communities, which are pictured as harmonious and idealized societies composed of 'children of nature', whose folk songs and epic tales testify to their nobility and bravery. Although the ideological tone of *Eine Geschichte aus Livlands Vergangenheit* is much different from that of Girgensohn's text, it ends with exactly the same scene: a baptismal ceremony, in this case, for Aazo. Beforehand, in the fight between Aazo and Kaupo, both are wounded. The dying Aazo is taken to his mother Linda, who has converted to Christianity, and as one of his last actions Aazo sends his priest to tell his followers that the foreigners should be allowed to stay because their god is stronger.

The Merkelian rebellion, led by the Baltic-German cultural elite at the turn of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, had become superfluous a century later as they no longer had to act as the voice of the colonized cultures. However, the new elite of colonized people (Estonian and Latvian intellectuals) adapted Merkel's point of view, transforming it into a new historical narrative. The Estonian national epic *Kalevipoeg* (*Kalew's Son*, 1857–1861), written by Friedrich Reinhold Kreutzwald (1803–1882), depicts the Estonians' mythical era of freedom and Kalevipoeg's battles with the iron men who had come to conquer the land. Carl Robert Jakobson's (1841–1882) patriotic address *Light, Darkness and Dawn in the History of the Estonian People* (1870), the Latvian national epic *Lāčplēsis* by Andrejs Pumpers (1841–1902), the poetry of Miķelis Krogzemis (1850–1879), and the historical novels of Eduard Bornhöhe (1862–1923), Andres Saal (1861–1931), Anton Rupainis (1906–1977), Mait Metsanurk (1879–1957), and Enn Kippel (1901–1942) all rewrite Merkel's story of resistance. And both the colonizer and the colonized could trace their respective arguments back to Henry's *Chronicle*. Statements such as, "We do not want foreign overlords, but elect our lords from amongst us" (Kippel 84), or "A free man will never want to bend his neck!" (Kippel 88) read like quotations from the *Chronicle*, modified for Estonian historical novels in the light of the modern idea of the democratic nation state. Proceeding from the idea of a representative democracy, it is not the Baltic pagans who prove to be the savages, but the homeless, brutal warriors who came to destroy the protodemocratic social order, their only goal that of gaining fame and fortune. The priests and warriors assembled under the cross do not represent higher moral and cultural values, rather "the warrior's armor and priest's robes hide a savage beast's spirit" (Metsanurk 93).

## Conclusion

Merkel would not have dared to dream that his interpretation of Baltic history would ever be taken up in the Estonian and Latvian languages. The myth of the ancient fight for freedom not only became the fundament of Estonian and Latvian national consciousness in the mid-nineteenth century, but it grounded Estonian academic historiography (as a new 'public transcript') in the second and third decades of the twentieth century. In postcolonial terms, the myth of the ancient fight for freedom, part of one and the same colonial discourse, was the topos that enabled the colonized (the people often called *undeutsch*) to construct their historical subjectivity in both a political and cultural sense. The Merkelian myth of history paved the way to one's own history and the opportunity for self-representation as an independent nation: becoming Estonians instead of colonized *Undeutsche*.

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## CHAPTER FOUR

# **Double Liminalization: The Historiography of German Colonialism and Reading the Marginalized in Colonial Texts**

DANIEL WALTHER

For much of the German postcolonial period,<sup>1</sup> knowledge of German colonialism was limited and often the purview of disciplines other than German history. In large part this was due to the acknowledged limited time span of the German colonial period. Indeed, even scholars from other areas of history working on colonialism noted that Germany only possessed colonies for a brief time, suggesting that not much could really be said and learned about it beyond the impact it had on Africa within the context of African history, especially in contrast to the longer colonial histories of other nations (Duignan and Gann). Perhaps because of this, not only has knowledge of German colonialism been fugitive for much of the twentieth century, but so has our understanding of the experiences and roles of those marginalized within the colonial system.

The collapse of the regime in East Germany in 1989 made important colonial archival records more easily accessible (due to a loosening of bureaucratic obstacles) which enabled the scholarship on German colonialism to grow significantly. Moreover, due to influences from other disciplines, such as literary studies and sociology, the scope and depth of the historical inquiry has also increased. Scholars have begun to situate German colonialism within broader contexts, including connecting it to the history of the homeland (i.e., the metropole) or to wider global trends. However, as new methodologies and focuses have surfaced, knowledge of the German colonial experience is again in danger of becoming fugitive as it potentially becomes subsumed under broader categories. Further, the voices of the historically marginalized, while increasingly being (re-)discovered, are still largely underrepresented. Fortunately, through work with other disciplines and theoretical approaches, indeed the very trend that threatens to marginalize our knowledge of German colonialism and the liminalized in the colonial experience can nonetheless be broadened and deepened. Area and subaltern studies, as well

1 Germany's colonial empire lasted roughly from 1884–1914 and included the territories of Southwest Africa (present-day Namibia), East Africa (Tanzania, Burundi, and Rwanda), Togo and Cameroon in Africa, and New Guinea, the Marshall, Caroline, and Mariana Islands and Samoa in the Pacific, as well as Qingdao in China.

as older works by Ronald Robinson, James Scott, and Detlev Peukert, offer methods for gaining entry to and interpreting the fugitive knowledge of the marginalized in German colonial history. Using these approaches, I offer new insights into the role and impact of those marginalized by German colonialism. These methodologies can supply not only more details about the everyday workings of the German colonial system, but also provide material that will enable scholars to better situate the German colonial experience into larger contexts without losing sight of the intricacies of how power was exercised and resisted in the colonies. Thus, they can contribute significantly to the ongoing reversal of the double liminalization in German colonial historiography.

## German Historiography of the Colonial Experience

In some respects, what I will suggest here takes us back to the early days of German colonial history and the first major breakthroughs in its study. Most of the work done on the subject prior to the late 1980s was actually conducted by scholars living mainly outside of Germany who concentrated not primarily on German history, but either on non-European history or comparative empire studies (Iliffe; Rudin; Louis). In the 1960s, several MA and PhD theses relating to German colonialism were written in the US, but for some reason most were not published (Osteraas; Bair; Van Trease; Wallenkampf). Thus, outside of Germany the study of German colonialism as a distinct research focus was often liminalized or subsumed under other topics.

In Germany prior to 1989, the investigation of the colonial past was cumbered, narrow in focus, and largely tied to ideology. As others have pointed out, most German scholars in the post-WWII era concentrated on the Holocaust (Friedrichs-meyer, Lennox, Zantop 4). Nevertheless, some research on German colonialism was published by West German scholars in the 1960s and 1970s. While important, their work was often employed to address larger historical phenomena. For example, in the case of Helmut Bley, his interpretation of the German colonial experience in Namibia served to prove Hannah Arendt's theory about the connection between imperialism and totalitarianism. Meanwhile, in East Germany, the study of the colonial period was chiefly tied to Marxist-Leninist political theory, especially the connection between capitalism and imperialism (Stoecker, *Deutschland und China*; Stoecker, *Kamerun*; Buettner; Drechsler).

It was not until the 1970s that US scholars started to publish important studies on colonial history that focused specifically on the German experience (Duignan and Gann; Smith, *German Colonial Empire*; and the republished Townsend) and had the potential to reach wider audiences. These were followed by several significant works published by West German authors in the 1980s (Gründer; Osterhammel). Around the same time, Germanists in Germany were also exploring the German colonial experience from a literary perspective (Warmbold; Benning-

hoff-Lühl), though their work was of little importance until a new generation of historians appeared after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

In the initial post-1989 period, the biggest influence on the future of German colonial studies came predominantly from American scholars of German Studies. Specifically, I am referring to Suzanne Zantop's *Colonial Fantasies*, published in 1997, and Sara Friedrichsmeyer, Sara Lennox, and Susanne Zantop's *The Imperialist Imagination: German Colonialism and Its Legacy* published the following year. Influenced by postcolonial studies, these books took a cultural approach to the examination of German colonialism, centering on how colonies and their inhabitants were conceptualized or 'imagined' in German literature, film, photography, and policies in the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial periods. These works would influence and inspire scholars in the decades to come. Those writing after the appearance of these publications, especially those working in the US, pursued investigations that went beyond traditional analyses of the political situation in the overseas possessions, utilizing methods employed in cultural studies. Yet, it should be noted that these newer studies did not divorce themselves entirely from the political realm. Rather, they used these new tools to sharpen and intensify our understanding, especially in terms of the different ways political power manifests itself.

Many of these younger scholars, though often discussing events in the colonial setting, in fact focused on events and phenomena in Germany. For example, Pascal Grosse looked at the relationship between eugenics, colonialism, and German bourgeois society. Ulrich van der Heyden and Joachim Zeller examined the traces of the colonial past in Berlin. Lora Wildenthal, while exploring events in the colonies, ultimately wrote about the role of metropolitan women in German colonialism (*German Women*). All these scholars were essentially interested in cultural examinations of colonial fantasies through the lens of historical inquiry. Even so, studies emerged that did actually concentrate on events in the colonies (Nuhn; von Trotha; Zimmerer, *Deutsche Herrschaft über Afrikaner*). One of the first written in English was my own *Creating Germans Abroad*.

In the post-1989 era, authors also expanded the scope of inquiry beyond the period of actual colonial possessions (Zantop; Friedrichsmeyer, Lennox and Zantop). Matthew Fitzpatrick's seminal *Liberal Imperialism* argued that the roots of German colonialism belong to the longer history of German liberalism, and hence, the history of this phenomenon began earlier. This strand of investigation was a sign that the discipline of history was finally catching up to the work of Zantop, moving beyond a mere perusal of colonial fantasies to a deeper historical inquiry into the precolonial period. Another salient work that provides a model for historians of German colonialism came from a sociologist, George Steinmetz. His *The Devil's Handwriting* takes a detailed comparative approach to the examination of the formation of colonial states, which, he argues, can be discerned through an analysis of colonial 'native' policies in German Southwest Africa, Samoa, and Qingdao. Such an approach freed Steinmetz from focusing on the

history of German colonialism *per se*, so that he could explore the position of colonial states within the context of modern state formation. The comparative element ultimately enabled him to refute the existence of a purely national colonial style. For historians, he successfully bridged the gap between the metropole and the everyday practices in the colonies, and revealed factors that influenced the different policies pursued in the colonies. Moreover, he suggested a model that can transcend the dependence on the nation state as a framework for investigating colonialism.

## German Colonial Genocides and the Holocaust: A Shared Subject?

Although our knowledge of German colonialism has grown considerably since 1989, by 1999 Lora Wildenthal was lamenting that colonial history still had not found its place in the larger context of German history; it was still being relegated to the periphery of German historiography (Wildenthal, “The Places of Colonialism”). One of the first monographs that attempted to provide a corrective to this situation actually preceded Wildenthal’s essay, namely Woodruff Smith’s *Ideological Origins* (1986). He placed German colonialism within the broader framework of German history by linking the ideas originating in German colonialism (loosely defined) to Nazi ideology, thus connecting these two episodes of German history. In the end, though, his approach was still reminiscent of Bley’s attempt to link imperialism with totalitarianism. In the last decade, numerous scholars have again tried to connect German colonialism to the Nazi period. Specifically, they interpret the genocidal wars against the Herero and Nama in Namibia (1904–1907) as direct antecedents of the Holocaust (see Gewalt; Zimmerer, *Von Windhuk nach Auschwitz*; Zimmerer, “Colonialism and the Holocaust”; Zimmerer, “Birth of the Ostland”; Zimmerer and Zeller). Some historians even consider this link to have given rise to demands for restitution for the descendants of those who suffered as a result of this conflict, a use of their scholarly expertise to promote specific political agendas (see Melber). The larger impact of this is to expose wider segments of the German population to a form of knowledge otherwise systematically marginalized.

Such interpretations, though, are heavily debated. For instance, Isabel Hull asserts that the Nama and Herero Wars need to be understood in the larger context of German military culture and not in terms of race (*Absolute Destruction*). While thought-provoking and insightful, Hull ultimately supports the German *Sonderweg* (unique path) thesis, which David Blackbourn and Geoff Eley have already successfully challenged. Matthew Fitzpatrick, on the other hand, deftly weaves the interpretations of the Holocaust within the larger framework of the German *Sonderweg* thesis and the earlier *Historikerstreit* (historians’ debate) over the origins of the Holocaust. He finally concludes that the epistemological origins of the two were decidedly different (“The Pre-History of the Holocaust?”).

Recently, Eric Weitz argued that it would have been plausible for the Holocaust to have been carried out even without the German colonial experience. Weitz attempts to underline the overemphasis on the German colonial experience as a primary causative agent for the Holocaust, a position shared by several other scholars who contend that by connecting German colonialism to the Holocaust the uniqueness of each is overlooked (Wildenthal, *German Women*; Kundrus, *Moderne Imperialisten*; Kundrus, “Von Windhoek nach Nürnberg”).

Despite the criticisms, these studies and the responses to them do increase our knowledge of German colonialism and move in the direction of including it in mainstream German national historiography. Nevertheless, works that advocate the connection between the two genocides are often single-minded in their purpose, i.e., tied to the German penchant for explaining the origins of the Holocaust: many of the scholars who write directly on this topic are themselves German. As a consequence, their investigations often draw attention away from the diversity and complexity of the German colonial experience.

Similarly, those works that have expanded the period of German colonialism to include the precolonial or postcolonial eras have de facto incorporated German colonialism into mainstream German history. However, they contribute little to our understanding of what actually happened in the colonies, i.e., the different power relations between colonizers and colonized as experienced through both the formal and informal discourses of power. As Frederick Cooper noted, “looking for a ‘textual colonization’ or a ‘metaphoric constellation’ distinct from the institutions through which colonial power is exercised risks making colonialism appear everywhere – and hence nowhere” (Cooper 183).

## **Transnational and Global Approaches to the Study of German Colonialism**

The ongoing publication of such studies, though, was part of a larger trend over the last decade that either minimized the complexity of the colonial situation, including its diversity both within specific colonies and between colonies, or looked almost exclusively at the metropole. This tendency was reinforced by two additional emerging strands of inquiry that placed German colonialism within broader contexts, namely transnational and global history. Transnational history was essentially introduced into the field of research on German colonialism by Sebastian Conrad and Jürgen Osterhammel’s *Das Kaiserreich transnational* in 2004. Their approach basically constituted an expansive notion of comparative history that transcended national boundaries and included the study of nations, societies, culture, and economics, with its point of departure being the concept of the ‘nation’, recognizing that this had been the dominant paradigm for modern states since the late nineteenth century.

One fruitful way to explore German colonialism in the transnational context is to employ Sebastian Conrad and Shalini Randeria's concept of 'shared' and 'divided' between the center and the periphery, the metropole and the colonies (Conrad and Randeria). Such a binary formulation allows the researcher to zero in on similarities of and differences between both experiences, on what was introduced into the colonies from home and how the colonial situation was different from the home country. Hence, their uniqueness can be investigated, while simultaneously placing the colonial phenomenon within the larger context of national history. Potentially Conrad and Randeria's model can be used to break down the national paradigm and allow for a fuller understanding of history by recognizing the imperial role in national discourses. Consequently, it could move the study of German colonialism in the direction already taken by scholars of British imperialism (e.g., Burton), and hence bring German colonial historiography into a larger historical discourse. However, because it is still tied to the concept of the nation, this approach currently excludes other modes of explaining the colonial situation. Moreover, due to its binary nature, transnational history can at times become constraining, especially when attempting to clarify complex situations.

The global perspective looks at larger phenomena (migration, trade, knowledge exchange), of which German colonialism is but a part. The primary focus, though, is on interactions in the larger world, which may or may not include the colonial experience. Some examples of this approach within the field of German colonialism include Andrew Zimmerman's *Alabama in Africa*, Conrad's *Globalisation and the Nation in Imperial Germany*, and Herbert Uerlings's "Kolonialer Diskurs, Globalisierung und postkoloniale Analyse," each of which demonstrates that this framework could produce insights that do not solely investigate German colonialism, but also other ways Germany has interacted with the world beyond its borders, including, but not limited to, its colonies. Thus, like transnationalism, a global position need not necessarily include German colonialism, which again remarginalizes Germany's colonial past.

## **Area Studies and Beyond: New Horizons for the Study of German Colonialism**

A more recent development in the writing of German colonial history combines expertise in the history of colonialism with the tools and knowledge belonging to area studies, such as African or Asian Studies. This perspective, again, was introduced by scholars who were not historians but rather came out of German Studies (primarily literary studies), which established bridges with scholars working in the African Studies Association and other area studies organizations. While such an approach ostensibly harks back to the earlier years when much of German colonial history was written by historians in other fields, such as African history, these scholars examine the subject from multiple perspectives and apply methods

that have only recently been devised (e.g., postcolonial studies, subaltern studies, feminist theory, and queer studies). Thus, their understanding of what constitutes a source and how to read it exceeds the ways that scholars used in the 1960s and 1970s (and even in the 1980s). Academics in these more recent fields interrogate new sources and reread old ones against the grain in order to give a voice to the voiceless and delve deeper into the everyday encounters between the colonizers and the colonized. One of the results is that they can go beyond the more obvious ways power was exercised (e.g., police, colonial administrators, and the military, each of which was often the topic of older studies). It is often extremely difficult to find the voices of indigenous commoners or even everyday colonizers, individuals for whom colonialism was a way of life, and who therefore had more opportunities to influence or be influenced by colonial policies. In general, few historical documents exist that directly record these voices. Rather, fragments of their lives and experiences are often preserved in the writings of others, primarily colonial officials, but also by other agents of colonialism. However, subaltern studies has demonstrated that it is possible to pick out ‘fragments’ or ‘traces’ of suppressed narratives, i.e., the stories of the subaltern, in the records of colonial officials (see Pandey).

Some of the newer approaches not only use methodologies and theories from area studies, but also from queer studies, the history of gender and sexuality, and the history of medicine. Many are still in their infancy, yet they hold much promise. For example, a medical historical approach provides new insights into another dimension of the colonial experience, as can be seen in Wolfgang Eckart’s *Medizin und Kolonialimperialismus*, which contains a detailed description of the medical policies and governmental actions pursued in the colonies and posits a useful, albeit limited explanation of what motivated colonial doctors. However, many of the studies published so far in this area tell us more about the history of medicine than about the history of colonialism (e.g., Davies or Isobe). In an essay written in the late 1990s, Warwick Anderson challenged scholars writing about colonial medicine to recognize that the history of medicine in itself was imperial. He suggested that acknowledging it as such could move us beyond the national paradigm to a broader approach in which colonialism itself is a model, much like Steinmetz argued that the colonial state was a distinct form of state (Steinmetz 41) and not merely an extension of the European nation state.

Similarly, while much work has been done on the role of gender in German colonialism (Kundrus, “‘Weiß und herrlich’”; Mamozoi; O’Donnell; Walgenbach), little attention has been paid to sexuality. Indeed, even though numerous scholars mention sexuality, in reality their focus tends to be on gender (see Essner), with women as the primary target of inquiry (Wildenthal, *German Women*). Although a concentration on masculinity, à la R.W. Connell, is rare, a few scholars from the broader realms of German and African Studies have nonetheless published articles on white male heterosexuality and homosexuality in the colonial setting (Walther, “Sex, Race, and Empire”; Walther, “Racializing Sex”; Schmidt, “Colo-

nial Intimacy”). Still, these studies, while enhancing our understanding of German colonialism, primarily center on the behavior and activities of whites.

## **Collaboration, Resistance, and the Presence of the Subaltern: Two Case Studies**

In a recent call for papers, organizers for a conference in 2013 at the University of Bern offer an interesting, albeit old way to interpret everyday colonial encounters. They suggest utilizing the concept of ‘collaboration’ that originated in the 1970s with Ronald Robinson. Robinson contended that collaboration played a salient role in constructing the colonial environment. He therefore argued that it was essential to understand both the colonizers and the colonized (“Cooperation”). The conference organizers asserted that “it seems that the time has come to revisit Robinson’s notion of collaboration by melding it together with approaches and aspects of global and postcolonial history,” suggesting that many of the new approaches mentioned above offer more nuanced ways to examine exactly what Robinson advocated four decades ago.

I maintain that this is indeed necessary and possible, especially because Robinson himself looked exclusively at the elites in colonial society. In other words, while he might offer a theory for exploring the interactions between colonizers and colonized and the roles both played in creating the colonial setting, his own application ignored significant segments of both populations. One possible way to update Robinson would be to employ other studies published earlier as a means to revitalize Robinson’s notion of ‘collaboration’, especially when coupled with the concept of resistance, albeit broadly conceptualized. Thus, in the context of German colonialism (and beyond) we can establish that opposition to a hegemonic power can be expressed in a variety of ways.

Detlev Peukert, for instance, in his *Inside Nazi Germany*, explores the various forms of dissident behavior in the Third Reich, including outright resistance. However, he also points out that people undertook actions that were often nonviolent and individualistic, behaviors that would usually be perceived as nonconforming rather than frank opposition or defiance. And even if an act of straight-out protest did take place, it may not have been directed at the regime *per se*, but rather at a particular policy or action on the part of the authorities. At the same time, cooperation with the regime may not have occurred out of pure ideological identification, but instead in pursuit of personal advancement or some other agenda. In essence, the use of Peukert reverses a trend in German colonial historiography: unlike others who try to use the German colonial past to explain the Nazi period, or at least the Holocaust, Peukert proffers a tool for explicating an aspect of the Nazi regime in order to more accurately comprehend elements of German colonialism.

Similar situations also occurred in the colonial setting. Numerous scholars – primarily Africanists, Asianists, and Oceanists – have explored various types of opposition to the occupying regime, though most investigated more overt forms of resistance (Iliffe; Hempenstall, *Pacific Islanders*; Hempenstall and Rutherford; Eckert, *Die Duala*; Eckert, *Grundbesitz*). However, some newer research, using subaltern studies and other methodologies, and drawing on knowledge from different area studies, has expanded our understanding of resistance to and collaboration with colonialism. Some of the best examples of these more refined studies of indigenous agency come primarily from German scholars working either on Africa (Eckert, *Herrschen und Verwalten*; Michels; Morlong; Moyd; Pesek), Asia, or the Pacific (Leutner; Mühlhahn). Many, though, still focus on those groups associated with the more obvious institutions of colonial power (the police, the bureaucracy, the political, economic, and cultural elites).

Through the work of James C. Scott, however, we acquire insights into how to recognize and interpret the less obvious and less overt acts of opposition. In his *Weapons of the Weak*, Scott showed that individual acts, though not necessarily aimed directly at the colonial German regime, nevertheless had a substantial impact on the colonial enterprise and revealed the degree to which the objects of control accepted or rejected the values being imposed upon them by colonial authorities. According to him, “[w]hatever the response [of the colonized], we must not miss the fact that [their] action[s] ... changed or narrowed the policy options available to the state,” calling these acts “everyday forms of resistance” (Scott 36).

Borrowing from Peukert, Scott, and Robinson, in the following we can also search for the “everyday forms of collaboration” and resistance by looking at documents from a fresh perspective and hence gain greater insights into the colonial phenomenon as well as discern those overlooked subaltern voices. Toward this end, two primary source documents will serve as examples of what is being proposed here. Admittedly, there are still limitations to how deep a recovery of lost voices can be achieved, but this approach can nevertheless uncover some of the fugitive knowledge of the marginalized.

The first document, produced within the context of the ban on mixed marriages, is a letter written in 1909 by Carl Becker, a German settler in Southwest Africa.<sup>2</sup> Becker was a member of the European community, but not directly a part of the colonial administration. In his missive, he petitions the governor not to have his marriage declared null and void on the grounds that he and his wife, a Rehobother (individuals of mixed Afrikaner and African heritage), maintain a good German household:

2 In 1905, the colonial government in Southwest Africa banned all marriages between Europeans (‘nonnatives’) and Africans (‘natives’, which legally included anyone with African blood). In 1907, the colonial High Court retroactively nullified all marriages between Europeans and Africans performed before the 1905 ban. The ban remained in effect until the end of German rule in 1914 (Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad* 39).

Your Excellency,

Allow me to repeat my request for the regranting of my civil rights. I am convinced that if your Excellency would consider my case fairly and without prejudice, you will not hesitate to comply with my request.

Through Paragraph 17f of the civil code I, as the husband of a Rehobother woman, am disenfranchised. Paragraph 17f stems from the idea that Southwest Africa is a white man's country. As a white man I make no comment, for the white man is in power at the moment and the final source of law is power. A study of Prussian history, however, shows that in her many annexations Prussia proceeded in each individual case with the greatest regard and respect for historical tradition. And with cause. I believe that this well-tried principle should be applied here, too. My marriage came about with the collaboration of the moral and legal agencies of the state before the publication of Paragraph 17f. I am utterly convinced that no retroactive legislation may deprive me of my rights.

The consequences of Paragraph 17f are absolutely shattering for me: I pay annually 5,000 marks to educate my five children, two of whom are in Germany. With the same number of children and a European wife I should receive an annual subsidy of 1,500 marks to meet the cost of their boarding fees at school. I receive nothing.

[...]

If I go anywhere with my wife, who is almost white (a picture of my family is enclosed) and in moral and intellectual respects is the equal of every pure white woman in the protectorate, I have to face unpleasantness.

All this happens to me despite the fact that I keep 30,000 acres of farmland in perfect order, that I personally carry all the costs associated with it, that I willingly shoulder the burden of taxes and expenses entailed in running a household of 8 whites and 40 natives. This is the thanks I get for contributing, as an old colonial soldier, to the conquest and securing of this land for Germany. Why does this happen to me? Because I haven't done as so many others (I can give names!) who have lived with native women and brought children into the world, only to abandon them and to live now partly in respect and honor, some of them in rags, but all enjoying the franchise.

[...] Your excellency. I am not a bad man. [...] Will my children, who are all raised German, be my heirs, will my sons become soldiers and later have the franchise? These are the questions that I must answer with yes, if all of my life's joy and desire to work is not supposed to disappear.

No power in the world will force me to separate from my wife, who has been for 12 years a true companion.

If my civil rights remain denied to me and my marriage not legally recognized, my joy and interest for this land, for which I sacrificed for years my best energy, will be extinguished.

So, your Excellency, I ask you once again urgently to put in a saving word for me. Please make the most thorough inquiries about me and my wife, and I invite your Excellency, indeed it is my honor, to come here and see with your own eyes that I have not neglected my farm. You will also see here, that you can give me my honor back without harming anyone, without you or the government losing anything. [...] (BArch R1001/2058: 193–94; author’s translation).

Some scholars have drawn on this document to demonstrate that mixed marriages occurred even among respectable members of society (Bley 217–18), while others utilized it to reveal the traits used to define Germanness, or more specifically what constituted a ‘good’ German family (Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad* 40). And Wildenthal employed it to illustrate male rights in the colonial setting (“Race, Gender, and Citizenship” 269).

We can also look at this text through the lens of ‘collaboration-resistance’ in an effort to better understand the letter writer’s motivation. Becker wants to remain married to a woman, who, according to German colonial law, is categorized as a ‘native’. While the motives are not obvious, it appears that he makes this request out of love or devotion, or perhaps even a sense of integrity. He states that he could do “as so many others,” who have simply abandoned their wives and children, but he does not. In fact, he writes that his wife is his “true companion,” and has been for twelve years. Finally, he states that his marriage is more important to him than the “joy and interest” he has in his land. In all likelihood, he meant his new homeland, Southwest Africa, however, by using the ambiguous word “land,” it could imply both the colony and Germany, thus potentially intimating that the efforts he has expended on behalf of developing the colony, as well as his service to the larger imperial ambitions of the German Empire, are being rejected.

While Becker’s petition is not necessarily an act of resistance, it is at least a form of opposition or noncompliance with regard to a specific policy, though not to the regime in itself. In fact, his arguments actually support the colonial agenda of populating the colony with supposedly hardworking, loyal Germans who establish German households so that the present and future of the colony can be preserved as a German possession (Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad* 28–45). He uses assertions that conform to the prevailing notions of Germanness (*Deutschtum*) by painstakingly pointing out that his household is a German one, he is prosperous, and he sends some of his children to school in Germany. He therefore demonstrates that he is contributing to the establishment of the German population in this settler colony. Another essential part of his argument is his insistence that his wife behaves in a manner comparable to a white, German woman. He

explicitly states that she is “almost white,” and in “moral and intellectual respects is the equal of every pure white woman” in the colony. Thus, even though the colonial regime places her in the category of racial ‘other’, i.e., a potential threat to the colonial order, in this instance Becker portrays her as a colonial supporter. As described here, both Becker and his wife could simultaneously be seen both as ‘opponents’ and ‘supporters’ of the regime.

Admittedly, we do not hear directly from Becker’s wife, but we can detect an implicit compliance on her part. We have no evidence that she wishes to dissolve the marriage, as was shown to be the case in other situations (Walther, *Creating Germans Abroad* 39). Moreover, Becker is willing to open up his house to the governor in order to show that it is indeed a German household, something that would be impossible to prove without his wife’s assistance, given that in contemporary thinking the domestic sphere was the purview of the woman (Chickering 160; Mosse 17).

Colonial medical reports, written by German physicians, are another source that enables us to increase our understanding of the everyday colonial experience. On the surface, the reports on the spread of venereal diseases in the colonies ascribed certain traits to indigenous populations, most notably their hypersexuality. For instance, in 1913, a certain Dr. Born wrote about the health situation on the Ebon atoll in the Pacific. In the report he intimated that all indigenous women were sexually promiscuous, even to the point of digging under a fence in order to engage in prostitution outside the confines of the hospital. Fences were introduced as a way to prevent diseased individuals from leaving before their treatments were completed so that they could not continue to infect others, as had ostensibly transpired previously.

[D]espite all supervision those from Ebon infected with venereal disease have found the opportunity to engage in sexual intercourse among themselves in the hospital as well as [with others] outside the hospital. It has even occurred that a girl infected with gonorrhoea dug under the fence in order to get outside! (BArch R1001/ 5788: 30, author’s translation).

The report, not surprisingly, did not attempt to consider the motivation of the women. Rather, it merely reflected the prevailing perception of non-European women. Granted, the real reason of their behavior cannot ultimately be known, yet by looking at the extant literature on prostitution and the role of women in various non-European cultures, we can interpret it not through the doctor’s eyes, but rather from the women’s perspective. For instance, as other scholars have successfully demonstrated for other European, even neighboring colonies, African and Asian women often pursued prostitution as a means to meet the needs of family members or for the women’s own needs or desires, such as the purchase of land for themselves or family members or to support their business (Bonner; Bozzoli; Hershatter; Little; Mair; Sissons; White). Thus, in this particular case, confining the women may have prevented them from making money, which led them

to subvert the measures that hindered them from attaining their goals. While some may have tried to leave to pursue possible business relations outside the compound, some of the women were perhaps interned with their husbands or sexual partners and desired to continue to have sexual intercourse with them. Another possibility is that some of those who tried to escape (or even did) may have wanted to leave simply because they were not accustomed to confinement.

Even though more possibilities exist than those explicitly suggested by Born's own words, there are still limitations to how much we can achieve by reading 'against the grain'. Ultimately, we do not know who these women were or what their true motivations consisted of. Nonetheless, we can still differentiate them as individuals pursuing their own agendas, ones that did not necessarily comply with a particular doctor's perception of them.

Regardless of the women's motivations, collectively acts like these throughout Germany's overseas possessions did influence colonial policies. Not only did the women described in Born's report attempt to circumvent specific health policies designed to combat the spread of venereal diseases, but others engaged in similar conduct, leaving the facility before treatment had even begun, for example, or, for those who actually were prostitutes by using a variety of methods to avoid registering as such. On an individual basis, these actions had little impact, but in the aggregate one could argue that they contributed to health officials' concerns about the spread of venereal diseases and shaped additional steps undertaken by colonial officials. Some physicians responded by adopting a more congenial attitude toward indigenous people in an effort to encourage them to seek medical consultation. Others introduced more disciplinary measures, such as the establishment of special hospital wings or the erection of fences, as in the case cited here. Both approaches resulted from the difficulties medical authorities encountered in trying to keep women from leaving before they completed their treatments. As the example above illustrates, for some of the women, even the new, more stringent measures were not enough to stop them from doing as they pleased. Their persistent behavior in this regard reveals the power of subaltern agency and the impediments to which colonial power was subject in the everyday colonial experiences. All of this essentially occurred at the individual level, but must be viewed collectively in order to more accurately assess the impact of such actions.

What these two examples give us are glimpses into the everyday workings of German colonialism and how both colonizers and colonized negotiated the terrain of colonial policies and power. In a very real sense, this new direction of reading hegemonic sources 'against the grain' is an evolution in the colonial historiography that in some respects mirrors what occurred in the study of Nazi Germany. While the two historical phenomena are not directly related or even exactly comparable, despite the efforts of some scholars to make them so, the trajectories of their study are similar. In the case of Nazi Germany, many of the first works published began by examining the political history of the reign at the higher levels of government. Eventually, though, scholars started to look at how the regime and

the NSDAP operated at the local level, as well as the people's responses to their actions. Such investigations were called "Alltagsgeschichte," or the history of the everyday.

The same holds true for German colonial historiography. Earlier studies tended to focus on political history. What is now emerging has shifted the focus to the micro level, guiding academic interest more in the direction of global or transnational history, with distinct elements of social history. Further, because some of this newer scholarship examines the interaction of groups with different cultural backgrounds, this is perhaps a move toward world history, but with an emphasis on everyday encounters.

## Conclusion

Perhaps coincidentally, just as Germany came late to the colonial game, the study of its colonial and imperial past was also belated. While a shorter colonial period might have lent itself to facilitating a more manageable investigation of the colonial past, in the case of German colonialism, the opposite was true. This was most likely due to the fact that the colonial period was too short to establish deeper roots in the collective national consciousness. For Germans (including academics) in the twentieth century, the colonial empire was not a defining moment. Rather, the experiences of WWII and the Cold War that followed became the overriding issues of interest. Especially in the immediate aftermath of the Holocaust, the German colonial past was a fugitive source of knowledge in the sense that not only in the German national memory, but for the modern Western world in general, WWII also became a compelling historical reference point. Only later was the colonial past rediscovered. Admittedly, studies did exist, but primarily within contexts that did not focus on colonialism as such. It was not until after the end of the Cold War that a strong impetus from the US moved our understanding of the German colonial past out of the margins. Increasingly, the knowledge of German colonialism has been integrated into the broader outlines of German national history and into projects of political activism.

The study of German colonialism has been strongly characterized by reliance on other disciplinary perspectives and approaches. The scholarship on the topic has often adopted newer methods and focuses that intensify and enrich our understanding of the German experience. We see this in the use of transnational and global history to investigate the colonial past. However, some of these approaches also threaten to marginalize German colonial history by subordinating it to broader agendas, once again relegating it to the sphere of oblivion. There are, however, other models, the employment of which can maintain not only the study of German colonialism as a viable and important research area, but also give agency to the liminalized, and, hence, make our apprehension of them less fugitive. This, though, requires conversations among various disciplines, most

notably area studies. Indeed, by working together, the double liminalization of German colonialism can slowly be addressed by making visible the history of German colonialism and those who experienced it, but left behind no direct traces of their own.

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**EPISTEMIC TRANSFERS  
AND BLOCKAGES BETWEEN  
ASIA AND EUROPE**



## **A Question of Moral Crisis. Western Discourse and Its Indian Object<sup>1</sup>**

SANJAY SETH

The 1830s witnessed a bitter dispute in the ranks of colonial officialdom over whether the British Indian government should patronize ‘Oriental’ knowledges, or whether it should direct its attentions solely to promoting Western knowledge, initially through the medium of the English language. Victory went to the ‘Anglicists’, led by Thomas Babington Macaulay, and from 1835 India’s colonial rulers became the agency for the promotion of ‘Western education’, that is, education which sought to disseminate modern, Western, rational knowledge through modern institutions and pedagogic processes. It was anticipated and desired by the victorious party that this would gradually supplant ‘indigenous’ knowledges, which were condemned as (variously) ‘superstitious’, ‘mythic’, ‘primitive’, and more generally, untrue. It was also expected that instruction in Western, rational knowledge would lead to improvement in the Indian character. It was commonly assumed that the Western-educated native would be honest and upright, and thus more reliable and diligent in the service of government than his corrupt predecessor; and that a sign of his intellectual and moral superiority would be his recognition of the virtues of British rule, and his secure attachment to the continuation of that rule. Christian missionaries also hoped to improve ‘the native’ through the schools that they provided, weaning him from evil customs and mistaken beliefs, and equipping him with the means to make his way in the world without falling prey to its temptations. They hoped to effect the greatest improvement of all by making him a Christian.<sup>2</sup>

However, in 1913 a major Government statement on educational policy observed that “the most thoughtful minds in India lament the tendency of the existing system of education to develop the intellectual at the expense of the moral and religious faculties,” and went so far as to declare that this was “unquestionably the most important educational problem of the time” (*Indian Educational Policy*, 1913). This claim marked the climax of the discourse on

1 This essay is a slightly altered reprint of my essay “Travelling Theory: Western Knowledge and its Indian Object” published in *International Studies in Sociology of Education* 21,4 (December 2011) 263–82. We thank the editors for the permission to reprint the essay.

2 Here as elsewhere, I use the male pronoun because the debate on education in colonial India presumed that the subjects of this pedagogy were male.

the ‘moral decline’ and ‘moral crisis’ of the educated Indian – a discourse that expressed the fear that the improvement consequent upon education had not in fact occurred, but rather that educated Indians had become less moral, less pious, and less disciplined than before. This discussion was coterminous with the beginnings of Western education in India, and had been gaining in density and intensity since the last quarter of the nineteenth century. By the early years of the new century, it was a matter of almost obsessive debate.

Western knowledge was disseminated through schools and universities because it was presumed to be superior to the indigenous knowledges it replaced. In this paper I am interested in the fact that the same knowledge being taught in schools and universities was also pressed into service to characterize and explain the moral decline of the educated Indian. How adequate was this knowledge to explaining its unintended and unexpected effects? Could it comprehend and account for its own failures? And more generally, what was the relation between Western knowledge as a means for comprehending social changes in India, and Western knowledge as one of the agents of that change? I will begin by documenting the discourse on the moral crisis of the educated Indian.

### **‘Unhinged and Unsettled’**

The warning that educated Indians were in danger of being plunged into a moral crisis was first issued in the early years following government patronage of Western education, principally by missionaries. The policy of not permitting religious instruction in Government schools and colleges was pursued because of a strong feeling in official ranks that any interference with the religious beliefs of their Indian subjects might endanger British rule and East India Company profits. It became one of the goals of missionary agitation in India to persuade either the government in India or the home authorities to overturn what they called a ‘godless’ educational policy.

Missionaries did not object to the provision of secular learning as such. The historic controversies that had marked the advance of secular knowledges in the Christian West were never played out in colonial India. Missionaries and government officials alike shared the belief that modern science was a solvent of Indian religious beliefs, which commingled a false theology with fantastical and nonsensical explanations of the world and its functioning. Inasmuch as Western learning undermined the native’s belief in the latter, it could not but also call into question faith in the former.

Those who had played a leading role in the decision of 1835 to limit Government patronage to Western education, including Thomas Macaulay and Charles Trevelyan, had insisted that government-provided education must not allow any religious instruction and must not be associated with any attempts at conversion; nonetheless, they and many others firmly believed that this education would be

conducive to the Christianization of India. Macaulay wrote in 1836, “No Hindoo, who has received an English education, ever remains sincerely attached to his own religion. [...] It is my firm belief that, if our plans of education are followed up, there will not be a single idolater among the respectable classes in Bengal thirty years hence” (qtd. in Clive 411). Sharing in this conviction, missionaries made the provision of education one of their chief tasks in India, in the hope that Western education would prove corrosive to Hindu beliefs and would thus serve to prepare the minds of educated Hindus for a later receptiveness to the word of God (see Seth, “*Which Good Book?*”; Viswanathan; and Laird).

However, the relative confidence of this earlier period – the expectation that Western education would eventually lead to more and more of the educated classes being weaned from their own religion and, perhaps via detours through reformed Hinduism such as the *Arya Samaj* or the Hindu-Christian eclecticism of the *Brahmo Samaj*, would be won over to Christianity – began to give way to concern in the latter part of the nineteenth century. The concern was fueled, above all else, by the fact that the hoped for transition to Christianity did not seem to be in the offing. For most of those who became dissatisfied with existing forms of Hinduism, the reformed versions they embraced proved to be not stop-overs on a longer journey toward Christianity, but rather the terminus. The critique of ‘godless education’ continued, but with a new sense of urgency; the dire results that had earlier been predicted were now held to have come true, and the educated Indian was said to have fallen prey to impiety and immorality. Lurid pictures were painted of the mental and moral condition of educated Indians. The headmaster of Bishop Corries Grammar School in Madras warned the government that “in the present transition state, brought about by European knowledge and science,” the students and graduates of government colleges “threw off all restraints,” indulging in the vices of “pride, discontent, drunkenness”; they “defile the flesh, despise dominion” (quoted in Keane 10, 12).

By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, the British Indian government also began to voice concerns about the morality of educated Indians. The *Report of the Indian Education [Hunter] Commission* of 1883 found that there had been a deterioration in the morality and manners of college students, and recommended the preparation of a “moral text-book” to be used to teach morality and manners. The existence of a ‘problem’ was affirmed a few years later in a Government circular that asserted: “[It] cannot be denied” that a Western, secular education “has in some measure resulted in the growth of tendencies unfavourable to discipline and favourable to irreverence in the rising generation,” “cut[ting] loose the rising generation from many of the moral and social bonds of their forefathers” (“Letter from the Government of India to all Local Governments and Administrations” 11, 18). The problem of moral decline, and the search for some form of moral training and discipline that would remedy it, now became a regular feature of governmental discussions almost up until Independence.

The accusations were, of course, widely disputed. The Indian government itself did not speak with one voice. Educated Indians, as one might expect, frequently contested the diagnosis of a moral decline. Justice Telang, one of the few Indian members appointed to the Hunter Commission, challenged that body's analysis of the issue, and disagreed with the recommendations that urged implementing of a "moral education" (vol. 1, 606–19). Some, like Brajendranath Seal, a professor at Calcutta University, simply responded with derision to "the hunt after orgies of secret vices or indulgences among a class so staid and generally abstemious as the Bengali youth of our colleges" (*Calcutta University Commission Report* vol. XII, 65).

But the numerous denials only testified to the ubiquitousness of the complaint and to the fact that a wider public – including its Indian members – participated in producing as well as opposing the discourse. Brahma Samaj leader Keshab Chunder Sen warned that India was undergoing a tremendous revolution, in the flux of which some educated Indians "run into the wildest vagaries of infidelity and skepticism and habits of dissipation. It is sad to reflect that the number of enlightened skeptics is growing in our midst [... Men] who laugh at religion and morality [...] Their number may soon assume fearful proportions" (Sen 40). "In times of transition," Sen wrote elsewhere, "we always find that men for a while become reckless. The old faith is gone, and no new faith is established in its place. Society is unhinged and unsettled" (Sen, qtd. in Murdoch 3). The Princely government of Mysore decided to introduce moral and religious instruction into schools and colleges, citing the increase in disrespect, vanity, and aggression among students as the reasons for initiating this step (Home Education).

## Diagnosing Moral Decline

The observation that a moral decline was taking place always came with an explanation. The symptoms of such a decline, and the evidence for it, lay in impiety, dissolute behavior, bad manners, conceit, immorality, and a decreasing respect for elders and for 'authority' more generally; these phenomena were usually gathered together under the rubric of 'inconsistency'. That the educated Indian was given to intellectual inconsistency was a commonplace. Writing in 1913, Sir Bampfylde Fuller stated that "[a]n Englishman is constantly disconcerted by the extraordinary contradictions which he observes between the words and the actions of an educated Indian, who seems untouched by inconsistencies which appear to him [the Englishman] scandalous" (Fuller 179). A few years later William Archer wrote, "Indians have an amazing capacity for learning, and for ignoring the consequences of what they learn" (Archer 240). Educated Indians also frequently noted, and sometimes bemoaned, their inconsistency.

The aetiology of this intellectual and moral inconsistency and confusion was traced back to an incomplete (or stalled) transition. Having to negotiate two dis-

tinct worlds, cultural domains characterized and governed by radically different conceptions of how the world worked, what a man's place in it was, and what constituted moral behavior, the educated Indian – so the theory went – was caught between these two worlds and their moral codes, unable to choose consistently between them. According to this explanation, the educated Indian had lost faith in the governing moral presumptions and beliefs of traditional Indian society, without yet being in a position to embrace the mores and presumptions governing modern, Western life. We have already encountered this line of reasoning, we have heard Keshab Chunder Sen and other Brahmos attribute moral decline to the Hindu being 'emancipated' from his own creed without having found another to take its place. Many other voices joined in characterizing and explaining the moral crisis of the educated Hindu in similar terms. *The Pioneer* observed that "we have introduced [the educated Bengali] to a literature which at every page proves the foolishness of his old beliefs," but have "given the native no new religion whereon to found a new morality". The result was that whereas "of old he had a moral code he felt he had to obey because he feared the displeasure of the gods by whom he believed it had been promulgated," now "the Hindu Pantheon has fallen, and with it all the Bengali ever had of morality" (January 10, 1888). A witness explained to the Hartog Commission, "We Indians are at present at a stage of transition and we do not know where we are. The old religious beliefs, the old traditions, the old culture is fast slipping away from our sight and we have yet to find and assimilate a culture which we can call our own" (Hartog Collection, n.p.).

One of the chief symptoms of moral crisis was 'inconsistency', an inconsistency that was usually thought to arise from an incomplete 'transition'. In some instances educated Indians were thought to hold inconsistent ideas; in others, inconsistencies were detected between their ideas and beliefs on the one hand, and their actions and practices on the other. In others still, the actions and practices they engaged in were held to be incompatible with one another. But while it is clear enough what it means to declare that ideas or beliefs are inconsistent or contradictory, what could it mean to say that an idea is inconsistent with a practice, or that two actions or practices are inconsistent with each other? Such notions make sense on the presumption that every action and practice can be traced back to an idea or belief animating it, and to then find these to be incongruent with one another; that is, it makes sense presuming that actions and practices are underpinned by and are expressions of ideas, beliefs, and values. In the discourse of moral decline, morality – even when it was something 'done' rather than an explicitly voiced belief – was seen as something that was 'held' in the form of beliefs and convictions, usually having their basis in religious beliefs and commitments. The moral confusion of the educated Indian could thus be seen not only in his openly professing values that were not consonant with, or were antithetical to, each other, but also in his engaging in practices which (in the view of

the authors of the discourse of moral decline) were animated by ideas and convictions that were at odds with one another.

Thus, an important presumption underlying the explanation of inconsistency was that it accorded centrality to consciousness and the ‘mind’; all actions, social practices, and institutions were seen to be expressions and manifestations of ideas and beliefs. As Marx put it in *Capital I*: “What distinguishes the worst of architects from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality” (174). In this passage, Marx points to this uniquely human faculty as one that serves to differentiate men from animals, whose activities are not objectifications of their thoughts. But historically this also served – as indeed it did in the case of Marx and Engels – to exorcise the gods. Gods are not another source and origin of practices and institutions, because gods are themselves seen as the manifestations and creations of men; gods exist in men’s consciousnesses. When in the nineteenth and twentieth century Feuerbach, Marx, Engels, Tylor, Frazer, Müller, Durkheim, Weber and others wrote about religion and magic, they presumed – irrespective of their own religious convictions – that the religion of their subjects was to be understood by first seeing it as an emanation of their (or their society’s) fears, thoughts, aspirations, and desires. The privileging of consciousness thus turns out to be connected to another, ‘anthropological’, presumption: the consciousness that is privileged is that of Man. Every act, practice, and institution is the manifestation of an idea or belief, and the only source and origin of ideas and beliefs is Man.

If it is assumed that Man is the source of ideas and representations, and hence that the social world is to be explained by reference to men – that there is nothing ‘more’ needed to understand social phenomena – it is also assumed that there is nothing ‘less’, and that once you have traced practices back to ideas and ideas back to men, no further regress is possible. The presumption that Man is source and origin is thus connected to yet another presumption, namely that he is singular and indivisible. He is not, for instance, regarded, as he is in the thinking of some societies, as divisible into the ‘forces’ or components that constitute him.

As my references to figures as diverse as Marx, Tylor, Frazer, Müller, Durkheim, Weber, and others indicate, the presumptions to which I am drawing attention to were not those of any particular intellectual current or school, but rather those of thought as it came to be constituted from the early modern period onward. There are of course many important differences between Marxists and Weberians, between Tylor and Durkheim, and so on; these differences have constituted the stuff of intellectual debate in the West (and elsewhere) for a long time. But there are also shared suppositions, which we often overlook, in part precisely because, being shared by the diverse intellectual currents that comprise our intellectual lives, they have become naturalized, and have come to appear not as presumptions made by a particular mode of thinking, but as the very preconditions of any sort of thinking.

The presumptions I am drawing attention to are similar to Kant and Durkheim's 'categories'. Arguing against skepticism and empiricism, Kant sought to show that certain intuitions and categories are not derived from experience, but are the precondition for experience and knowledge. Drawing directly (but loosely) upon Kant, Durkheim (also rejecting empiricism) argued that *a priori* mental conceptions are what make it possible to have experience and knowledge. The assumptions underlying the characterization of moral crisis – the privileging of consciousness, the anthropological presumption that Man is the source and origin of all ideas and practices and institutions, and the idea that Man and his consciousness are indivisible – are, I suggest, analogous to categories in the Kantian/Durkheimian sense. They are not 'hypotheses' or explanations, but fundamental categories that make hypotheses and explanations (in this case, the explanation of moral crisis in terms of inconsistency and transition) possible.

However, when pressed into service in order to characterize and explain the moral crisis of the educated Indian, I suggest that these categories reveal that they are inadequate to their object; and that, *pace* Kant and Durkheim, these categories are not in fact universal and necessary, but are in a twofold sense specifically modern. First, a number of the presumptions I have drawn attention to only assume their self-evident and axiomatic status in modern times. Second, taken collectively, they signify a tectonic shift in focus from the world to the subject. If Cartesianism and empiricism effected or reconfigured a split between a perceiving/knowing subject and an object known, philosophy after Kant has accorded the latter an increasingly active role. The categories are not ways of recognizing and naming a world that is in fact ordered in those ways, but are rather classifications that we impose upon the world, those that apply to experience because they serve to constitute it.

## Diagnosing the Diagnosis

The view that religion is principally a matter of belief, and that religions vary according to what is believed, is the product of a very specific, European, and Christian history. This is one in which deism and the 'discovery' of 'natural religion' play a large part, for it was the presumption that there was a natural religion underpinning all religions that gave rise to the view that religions were systems of belief. If religion was conceived as a matter concerning belief, it is this, conversely, which made it possible to invent the category 'religion', as the genus of which different religious beliefs are the species. It is in the course of the history of Christianity and debates around it in Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment Europe that 'religion' and 'belief' emerge as mutually constitutive categories. Thus, the very notion of religion is itself, writes Talal Asad, "a Christian theological category" (qtd. in King 40); it is, writes John Hick, "a modern invention

which the West, during the last two hundred years or so, has exported to the rest of the world” (vii).

But Hindus did not ‘believe’ in their religion, and it was not such beliefs that constituted Hinduism. Indeed, Hindus do not even ‘believe’ that their numerous gods exist; they know them to coexist with humans. Whatever the validity may be of seeing these gods as ‘projections’, or ‘symbols’, or as, in Durkheim’s words, “exist[ing] only because they are represented as such in minds” (qtd. in Jones 55), such interpretations are far removed from the Hindu understanding, in which gods and humans coexist as persons. It is, of course, true of many religious people that they do not simply ‘believe’ in their gods or spirits, but know them to exist. There is an inherent paradox in seeking to characterize a society of this sort according to the rationalist categories of modern thought. For present purposes, however, it is sufficient to note that in this case what is at issue is not simply the polite skepticism of the social scientist versus the devotion of the religious. Hindus do not ‘know’ their gods to exist in some supernatural realm, they know that their gods exist because they form part of the everyday world of humans. There is no sharp separation between a sacred realm inhabited by gods and a mundane one of men. As C.J. Fuller observes, popular Hinduism is “premised on the lack of any absolute divide between them [...] [;] human beings can be divine forms under many and various conditions, and the claim to divinity is unsensational, even banal, in a way that it could never be in a monotheistic religion lacking 330 million deities” (31).

The numerous deities of Hinduism are co-present with humans, and highly visible; they exist as spirits, ghosts, and in the form of those numerous idols that so offended the sensibility of their rulers. ‘Sympathetic’ observers, as well as those Hindus who sought to defend the honor of their religion by denying that this ‘idolatry’ was an integral element of it, often suggested that these representations were a popular corruption. Others suggested that they were allegorical devices made necessary to render the ‘supreme being’ of Hinduism intelligible to ordinary people. The first explanation drew upon a common distinction between a vulgar, debased religion and a high, pure one. The second explanation additionally drew upon a Christian understanding and defence of idols, for while Christianity has been hostile to the worship of ‘graven images’, it nonetheless finds a legitimate place for religious images – St Thomas Aquinas, for instance, defended the use of images because they were conducive to the instruction of the unlettered, and because they served to excite the emotions and devotion (Freedberg 162).

But the analogy suggested by such a comparison does not hold: whereas in the Christian tradition such images were very clearly representations of an original, for most Hindus idols or *murtis* (images, forms) are not, in fact, ‘representations’ of gods that reside elsewhere (Davis). At the very least, the idol, image, or *murti*, once its eyes have been pierced and appropriate ceremonies observed, partakes of the *shakti* (power) of the god; for most Hindus, it *is* a god. As Diana Eck

explains, “The *murti* is more than a likeness; it is the deity itself taken ‘form’. The uses of the word *murti* in the Upanishads and the Bhagavad Gita suggest that the form *is* its essence. The flame is the *murti* of the fire [...] or the year is the *murti* of time [...] the *murti* is a body-taking, a manifestation, and is not different from the reality itself” (38).

Thus the profusion of icons in Hinduism is also a profusion of gods; they are ever present, part of the world of humans. To render this by saying that ‘Hindus believe that there are numerous gods’, as the sociologist of religion must do (since modern social science cannot treat gods as real beings, as actors in the world), is not only and obviously to deny the self-understandings of the subjects of one’s study. It is also, and less obviously, to translate their self-understandings into our own categories, to claim that the gods ‘actually’ reside in human consciousness, and are thus a matter of beliefs. But inasmuch as Hindus do not inhabit a world in which the existence of their gods is dependent upon human belief in them, a key presumption of the whole discourse of moral crisis becomes deeply problematic. How could Western-educated Hindus have been torn between their traditional religious beliefs and the ideas they encountered as a consequence of their exposure to Western education if their Hinduism was not a matter of beliefs in the first place?

The profusion of gods in India, embodied in the innumerable idols they inhabit, thus indicates not only that Hindus did not ‘believe’ in their gods, but also that the logical distinctions that we assume to be fundamental to thought were here conspicuously absent. Some, like Hegel in his 1827 lectures on religion, concluded from this that Hindus possessed no logic; others have suggested that this was a world of ‘fluid’ categories. By contrast, Lucien Lévy-Bruhl, studying the evidence of societies that seemed similarly prone to fundamental mistakes of categorization, thought he discerned an alternative logic at work. Lévy-Bruhl rejected the explanation that ‘primitives’ attributed mystical and anthropomorphic qualities to natural phenomena (animism), on the grounds that such an explanation attributed to the native the ability to make a fundamental distinction between nature and the supernatural, between matter and the mystic realm, and between the observing subject and the object, which was not his:

In the collective representations of primitive mentality, objects, beings, phenomena can be, though in a way incomprehensible to us, both themselves and something other than themselves [...] The ubiquity or multipresence of existing beings, the identity of one with many, of the same and of another, of the individual and the species – in short, everything that would scandalize and reduce to despair thought which is subject to the law of contradiction, is implicitly admitted by this prelogical mentality. (Lévy-Bruhl 363)

The use of unfortunate terms such as ‘primitive’, ‘mystical’, and ‘prelogical’ notwithstanding, we could conclude, as Rodney Needham does, that Lévy-Bruhl’s

insights allow us to conceive the ‘strangeness’ of other mentalities not as “mere errors, as detected by a finally superior rationality of which we were the fortunate possessors,” but as evidence for the fact that “other civilizations present us with *alternative* categories and modes of thought” (183). That would be an advance over declaring Hinduism to be possessed of no logic at all, or registering its ‘difference’ by means of terms such as ‘fluidity’. However, Lévy-Bruhl’s explanation still presupposes an active subject who organizes and experiences the world through the categories of mind – the work from which I have been quoting was originally titled *Les Fonctions Mentales Dans Les Societies Inferieures*. Lévy-Bruhl takes us beyond Durkheim in allowing us to recognize that these categories may vary quite radically, but they remain those that humans impose upon the world, in the sense that they are what is necessary for people to be able to experience and understand their world.

By contrast, Timothy Mitchell, rereading Pierre Bourdieu’s account of the housing of the Kabyle people, seeks to avoid reducing different understandings to mental categories and the operations of the mind. Presented with understandings that see in material objects homologies and attractions, and forces and potentials that require balancing and tending, we are apt to read these relations as ‘representations’ and ‘symbols’. Mitchell resists such readings, and writes:

There is nothing symbolic in this world. Gall is not associated with wormwood because it symbolizes bitterness. It occurs itself as the trace of bitterness. The grain does not represent fertility, and therefore the woman. It is itself fertile, and duplicates in itself the swelling of a pregnant woman’s belly. Neither the grain nor the woman is merely a sign signifying the other and neither, it follows, has the status of the original, the ‘real’ referent or meaning of which the other would be merely the sign. These associations, in consequence, should not be explained in terms of any symbolic or cultural ‘code’, the separate realm to which we imagine such origins to belong [...] resemblances and differences do not form a separate realm of meaning, a code apart from things themselves; hence this very notion of a ‘thing’ does not occur. For the same reason, there is not ‘nature’ – in our own sense of the great referent, the signified in terms of which such a code is distinguished. (61)

The relations in question “are not the relations between an object and its meaning, as we would say, or between a symbol and the idea for which it stands” (60).

The ‘primitives’ studied by Lévy-Bruhl, and the Berber-speaking Kabyle of Algeria discussed by Mitchell are, of course, societies very different from those of India. I draw attention to them here not in order to suggest a strict analogy, but rather to suggest that where we see an apparent absence of logic, or a ‘symbolism’ run riot, what we may in fact be observing is a different logic at work, or an ontology that is not accessible to knowledge or experience solely through the categories of a collective mind. The latter point is one to which I shall return. But for now, let us note that even the idea of the unified self as the source and site of

ideas and of consciousness, seemingly so undeniable, is a category that was not at all self-evident to every Hindu. It has often been observed that the Hindu philosophical tradition has a ‘weak’ conception of selfhood (Mohanty 198). The Buddhist doctrines of *anatman* (not-self) and Dependent Origination go considerably further, denying that there is a reality corresponding to the grammatical subject of verbs, and proposing that the personality is not a permanent self or subject, but rather a temporary constellation composed of five forces or *skandas* (Collins). Persons are – in one reading – not indivisible, bounded units, but are ‘dividual’ or divisible in the sense that they are themselves composed of substances and essences that are absorbed and passed on through various exchanges. The fact that each person is seen to be composed of substances that are exchanged, altered, and are conducive (or not) to good health and prosperity, militates against the ‘natural’ presumption that while society, group, and family can all be decomposed into individual persons, the person or self is not subject to further division. The gap or mismatch between the categories employed to diagnose ‘moral decline’ and the moral and religious life of Hindus, would seem to extend even to the self. Far from being the unified, indivisible seat of consciousness and source of moral ideas and actions presumed by our categories, the Hindu self appears as a ‘leaky’ one, with porous boundaries (see Daniel).

### **What Counts as an Explanation?**

It may be objected that all I have done is to demonstrate that the ways in which social actors made sense of their situation was not consonant with the sorts of explanations that were offered for their predicament, but that this in no way invalidates such explanations. Explanations within the social sciences are often expected not only to be contrary to those offered by the subjects of study; it is sometimes even considered to be a sign of their superior analytical quality that they go ‘behind’ or ‘under’ the self-understandings of their subjects to explain what is ‘really’ going on. Thus to demonstrate, as I have done, that the self-understandings of social actors clash with the categories employed in the explanation of moral crisis, does not in any way negate this explanation.

Whatever the general merits of the proposition that the social scientist can disregard or at least ‘bracket’ the self-understandings of those being studied, in the case of the diagnosis of moral crisis, such self-understandings are critical to the explanation being offered. Irrespective of whether the subjects of this explanation would have recognized and/or embraced these categories, such categories had to be part of the world they inhabited for the phenomenon of moral crisis to even be visible, let alone become the subject of speculation and explanation. Let me explain what I mean by way of an example. When Freud discusses the dreams of historical figures, he is operating in the manner prescribed by Durkheim. The fact that some of these people from times past regarded their dreams as revela-

tions, thus rendering their own conceptions at odds with those of the analyst, can be discarded or bracketed, and the dream can be analyzed. However, where Freud engages in psychoanalytic practice, with the aim of analyzing dreams in order to diagnose a neurosis, it is necessary that the patient accept, at a minimum, that dreams are revelatory of the workings of his/her mind, rather than revelations of the gods, if the analysis is to serve any therapeutic purpose. *Analogously, if the subjects of the discourse of moral decline did not privilege consciousness, this could not have been the battleground upon which their contending beliefs met; if their 'religion' was not something 'believed' and their morality something 'held', they could not have been torn by conflicting beliefs and moralities; and if they never did have a unified self, they could not subsequently have suffered from a divided one.* In short, if the subjects of this explanation did not inhabit a world where categories of consciousness, mind, and the indivisible self pertained, they could not have experienced a crisis at all, and there would be nothing to explain in the first place.

Could we then draw the opposite conclusion – that it is not that there was a moral crisis which was then explained in terms of inconsistency and transition, but rather that the categories presumed and employed by the explanation ‘produced’ the very crisis which was to be explained? Were ‘inconsistency’ and ‘crisis’ built into the categories of explanation, rather than being a feature of the life of the educated Indian – which would render comprehensible why so many educated Indians remained blithely unaware that they were ‘torn’ and in the throes of crisis?

However, this will not do either, because there were those who testified to having emerged from a moral crisis, or who testified that some of their fellow countrymen were undergoing such a crisis. It cannot, then, be the case that the explanation of moral crisis conjured up a phenomenon that did not exist. Our demonstration – that the categories through which this crisis was explained did not correspond to the world inhabited by those whom it sought to explain – cannot be dismissed on the grounds that the categories of explanation do not have to accord with the self-understandings of those being explained. But at the same time, we have to be able to account for the fact that some educated Indians *did* explain themselves in these ways. Our question now becomes: Why did some Indians find the categories underlying the explanation of moral crisis adequate for explaining and making sense of their experience, or that of others, while a great many educated Indians did not?

## Compartments of the ‘Mind’

In his *When A Great Tradition Modernizes* (1972), Milton Singer studied a sample of nineteen industrialist leaders based in Madras, men whose occupation made them very much a part of modernity, but other aspects of whose lives, he found,

continued to be marked by ‘traditional’ patterns and practices. Singer observed that “the industrial leaders not only did not experience soul-shattering conflicts between their religious and social traditions and their industrial careers, but in fact adapted the two spheres [...]” (343). They did so by “a *compartmentalization* of two spheres of conduct and belief that would otherwise collide.” And this occurred in such a manner that traditional beliefs and practices were confined to the home, while modern ones were associated with the office and factory (321). “By compartmentalizing their lives in this way,” writes Singer, “they are able to function both as good Hindus and as good industrialists” (348). Whereas the discourse of moral crisis purported to find that trafficking between the world of universities and offices, and the world of home and religious ritual produced people who were troubled and even ‘torn’, Singer concludes the opposite, albeit by employing the same categories of explanation and analysis as those used by the architects of the moral crisis discourse. Thus he employs the verb ‘categorized’, indicating that it is the agents who assign the norms of belief and action to different spheres; and he explains that these agents divide their norms into two compartments of the mind, applying each to the relevant sphere of social action, rather as a bilingual speaker keeps two languages in her head, using whichever is appropriate. The same categories that inform the analysis of moral inconsistency are here employed to yield a diametrically opposed result.

In *Provincializing Europe*, Dipesh Chakrabarty discusses a Bengali text, *Kalikata Kamalalaya* (1823), written by Bhabanicharan Bandyopadhyaya, which stages a debate between a Brahmin living and working in Calcutta, and a newcomer from the countryside. The latter gives voice to many of the anxieties of the time, including the fear that making a living in the emergent ‘civil society’ of colonial Calcutta involved the neglect of ritual observances appropriate to a high caste Hindu, for example, mixing languages, clothing, food, and so on. The resident of Calcutta concedes that there are those of whom this is true, but adds that good Hindus managed to straddle the worlds of obligations and rituals to the gods and one’s male ancestors on the one hand, and their (necessary) engagement with colonial civil society in the course of pursuing worldly interests such as wealth and power, on the other. They accomplish this feat by seeking to erect and maintain boundaries between the different domains – for instance, they continue to perform their ritual duties (adjusting the times when these are performed where the requirements of making one’s livelihood necessitates this), and they only remain at work as long as is necessary. The Brahmin who successfully negotiates the spheres of colonial civil-political society and Hindu ritual and caste obligations (and the text concedes that there are those who do not successfully do so) is not riven by conflict and inconsistency. The protagonist of *Kalikata Kamalalaya* explains to his interlocutor (in Chakrabarty’s words), “that in spite of the new structuring of the day required by colonial civil society, the true Hindu strove to maintain a critical symbolic boundary between the three spheres of involvement and action (*karma*) that defined life. These spheres were: *daivakarma* (action to

do with the realm of the gods), *pitrikarma* (action pertaining to one's male ancestors), and *vishaykarma* (actions undertaken in pursuit of worldly interests such as wealth, livelihood, fame, and secular power)" (220).

The practices belonging to colonial civil society belong to *vishaykarma*, and "the city-dweller's aim was to prevent [these practices and the words and ideas associated with them] from polluting the ritually purer domains in which one transacted with gods and ancestors (*daivakarma* and *pitrikarma*)" (221).

At first glance this may seem very similar to Singer's account: the successful Brahmin is one who manages to 'compartmentalize', thereby straddling two domains requiring different values and practices, without being torn or conflicted. However, in Chakrabarty's reading of this text, there is nothing to suggest that it is the Brahmin who assigns or 'categorizes', as if the continued existence of these different realms were conjured up by and maintained in the mind, or by 'culture' as a sort of sedimented, collective mind. Rather, the good Brahmin is one who maintains categorical distinctions that are not of his making, but which precede his activities and understandings; they are what endow human activities with their boundaries and meanings, what make a meaningful human life possible. Unlike Kant or Durkheim, these distinctions are part of a preexisting order, part of the furniture of the world that one has to acknowledge and to which one must adapt, rather than categories of the 'mind' or of Reason, those ways in which humans organize and order their world. *Daivakarma*, *pitrikarma*, and *vishaykarma* are not logical categories or features of the human mind, but rather ontological ones; they are not what humans use to categorize and organize experience, they are what make meaningful and ethical experience possible in the first place.

We have seen earlier that the categories of our modern, Western thought, even where they were not adequate to their object, sometimes proliferated nonetheless, and some Indians even came to endorse and contribute to the discourse of moral inconsistency and crisis. Given this, it is perfectly possible, even plausible (the plausibility of this does not rest upon our wholly endorsing Singer's methods or his conclusions) that the world described in *Kalikata Kamalalaya* yielded to the world described by Singer, one in which educated and 'modern' Indians, now possessed of mind and consciousness, and an indivisible self, could experience conflict – or devise ways to avoid it. Such changes have undoubtedly occurred; we are now better placed to specify the nature of this 'transition'.

## Knowledge 'of' the World, Knowledge 'in' the World

The discourse of moral decline arose because many in India felt that the knowledge disseminated through schools and universities had produced an unexpected effect; educated Indians had been plunged into a moral crisis, no longer fully able to believe in the moral code derived from their own religion and worldview, without yet being in a position to embrace the rationality and morality correspond-

ing to the new world of colonial civil society. I have argued that this characterization and explanation presumed categories that were not adequate to their object; a great many educated Indians who were described as being in the throes of a moral crisis were themselves quite unaware of the fact. Others, however, had come to subscribe to this explanation and to so characterize their own experience. Why was this so, and what was the nature of the difference between the two groups? At the beginning of this essay I showed that Macaulay and others anticipated that the introduction of Western education would lead Hindus to forsake their religion and eventually become Christians. They were wrong: a few conversions aside, most educated Hindus did not abandon their religion. As a predictive explanation, this was mistaken, for many of the reasons we have been discussing – it assumed that religion was a matter of belief, and that belief in Hinduism would be undermined when those beliefs were challenged by other beliefs or convictions. The fact that some educated Hindus did convert, though, and in so doing offered explanations that supported Macaulay’s reasoning, might suggest that this explanation or prediction, and the presumptions that were embedded in it, came to be true for some. Change did take place, a crisis was experienced, and inconsistency was one of the manifestations of this crisis.

However, in light of the preceding discussion, I would explain this in terms very different from those employed in the discourse of moral crisis. I suggest that a conflict of beliefs and ensuing inconsistency and crisis were not the ‘cause’ of religious conversion, but rather served as a way of describing and making sense of it. Conflict and crisis could only be experienced where the categories through which we experience the world came to be seen as ones that human consciousness imposes upon the world, rather than distinctions to which humans adapt themselves. It is not that there were conflicts in their mind that led some to become Christians; it is rather that once they had become Christians and came to see their new religion as something consisting of beliefs and values, they retrospectively made sense of their conversion in these terms. This response is a way of making sense of and narrating a change (and making sense of change *by* narrating it), and doing so in the terms and categories of one’s changed position, explaining both how one could once have been wrong, and why one is now right. Here, to ‘explain’ is not the same thing as locating a ‘cause’, and the explanation is an integral part of the transformation being characterized, rather than being something external to it.

An example may help to clarify my point. In his rereading of Freud’s analysis of the Wolf Man (a case in which Freud traces a neurosis back to his patient having seen his parents having sex), Slavoj Žižek positions this trauma within the ‘real’, rather than the symbolic. One could say that the event was the ‘cause’ of the subsequent neurosis. However, at the age of two this was not a trauma for the child at all; it only became so later, when the child entered the symbolic order and could not fit this scene into it – “the trauma has no existence of its own prior to symbolization,” and therefore, it would be a mistake to “obliterate this ret-

rospective character of the trauma and ‘substantialize’ it into a positive entity, one that can be isolated as a cause preceding its symbolic effects.” There is thus a peculiarity about invoking the trauma as an explanation for a neurosis, which Žižek characterizes as “[t]he paradox of trauma qua cause, which does not pre-exist its effects but is itself retroactively ‘posited’ by them,” and which involves “a kind of temporal loop” (102). I do not offer this illustration as a strict analogy; we obviously cannot fit the social phenomenon in question into the Lacanian categories of the real and symbolic. It is the form of the argument that is relevant. Žižek suggests that in the case of the Wolf Man the very idea of cause (primal scene) only makes sense and exists inasmuch as it is retrospectively posited; the question of whether it was ‘really’ a cause (‘really’ meaning antecedent to its effects, not retrospectively posited by them) is unanswerable.

The explanation of moral crisis in terms of inconsistency and transition, I submit, is of this sort. Only those for whom the categories of mind, belief, and the indivisible self had become real could characterize their experience (or that of others) in terms of crisis and inconsistency. This presupposed and required that they had come to experience the world through categories of the mind, in the form described by Kant and Durkheim, rather than as described by the protagonist of *Kalikata Kamalalaya*. Conversely, those for whom these categories did not make sense – those for whom the categories that made experience possible and gave it its characteristic forms were ontological ones, such that knowledge and experience were ‘of’ these distinctions rather than ‘through’ them – could not even see or experience the effect that was being explained. The conceptual vocabulary that would allow them to even experience, let alone describe, a crisis in the ‘mind’ was not available.

This is not the same as simply saying that the explanation of moral crisis was ‘sometimes’ accurate, that this explanation seemed to hold true for some educated Indians but not others. It *is* to say that, but it goes further, clarifying what it means to say that some Indians experienced a ‘crisis’ – namely, they now inhabited a world and lived a life in which religion and morality were beliefs held, and in which the dissonance between those beliefs rooted in Hindu traditions and those of the modern, ‘rational’ world could be perceived and experienced as contrary pulls and conflicts. The question of why some Indians had this experience and others did not has not been dissolved, because we have not dismissed moral crisis as false, as a mere specter produced by a faulty explanation. Yet, we have formulated the question in such a way that it does not simply involve a search for the sociological factors that led some Hindus to fall victim to the crisis and others not, as if the fact of crisis was separate from and antecedent to its explanation. We are rather asking why some crossed over into that realm where they could experience crisis. And (which is the same thing), how did they encounter the language with which to perceive and articulate this crisis?

The factors historians normally cite when explaining fundamental changes in India, and the ‘transition’ from one form of society and way of life to another,

may all continue to be relevant: the rise of the market and an impersonal cash nexus, the erosion of traditional communities, and so on (see Sarkar, for a good example). My account does not displace such historical explanations, it rather reconceives what we mean by ‘explaining a phenomenon’. We now see such social phenomena and social changes not as acting upon social actors so as to change the ways they thought and believed and the values they embraced, but as creating conceptions of ‘belief’ and ‘values’ in the first place.

This means that we must see the categories of our Western, modern social science not simply as ways of explaining change, but as constitutive of change itself. The modern Western knowledge introduced and disseminated through Western education, and through the bureaucratic operations of the office and the impersonal cash nexus of the market was not just a way of knowing India, but also a force in reshaping it. And the knowledge that traveled to India was most at home in its new locale – that is to say, was best able to fulfill its function of ‘understanding’ and ‘explaining’ India – when it had the effect of reshaping the object that it sought to know.

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## **(Im-)Potent Knowledges. Preserving ‘Traditional’ Tibetan Medicine Through Modern Science<sup>1</sup>**

STEPHAN KLOOS

*When we lose the potency of tradition, then we need the help of modernity.*  
Dr. Tenzin Thaye, September 19, 2008, Dharamsala

Tibet is widely associated with the tragic story of occupation, exile, and loss that began with Mao’s invasion of Eastern Tibet in 1950, culminated with the Dalai Lama’s flight to India and the violent reforms of the Cultural Revolution, and continues today amid media reports on human rights abuses, self-immolations, and rapid modernization in Tibet.<sup>2</sup> In many ways, Tibet’s fate is one seen all too often in world history. What makes it stand out, however, is the Dalai Lama’s successful portrayal of Tibetan culture as a rich repository of knowledge holding unique relevance for the contemporary world (see e.g., Dalai Lama, *Ancient Wisdom*). This characterization, and the related concern with cultural survival, taps into a more general, global modernist narrative (Adams, *Particularizing Modernity* 222) that assigns ‘traditional’ knowledge a precarious status of weakness, defined by the specter of imminent loss and the imperative for preservation. Two kinds of knowledge in particular function as central identifiers of Tibetan culture: the spiritual-philosophical knowledge of Tibetan Buddhism, and the medical-pharmaceutical knowledge of Tibetan medicine, also known as *Sowa Rigpa* (*gso ba rig pa*: the science of healing). This essay will explore Tibetan efforts to

- 1 I would like to express my gratitude to the organizers of the symposium “Fugitive Knowledges” at Rostock University for inviting me to participate in this exceptionally productive opportunity for intellectual exchange – particularly Gesa Mackenthun, Klaus Hock, Hans-Uwe Lammell, and all the involved graduate students. I am also indebted to Andreas Beer for his careful editing and constructive comments, and to Paula Ross for her excellent English language improvements; needless to say, any remaining errors are mine alone. The research and writing of this chapter has been funded, at different stages, by the Wenner Gren Foundation, the Austrian Science Fund (FWF P25997–G15), and an ERC Starting Grant (336932). As usual, this work would not have been possible without the help and cooperation of the practitioners and administrators of Tibetan medicine in India. I thank them all.
- 2 See Powers for a good collection of references on both the Chinese and exile Tibetan positions.

engage with modern science in order to ‘preserve’ Tibetan medicine in a context of exile, modernity, and a capitalist economy.

## **Tibetan (Medical) Knowledge in Exile**

Together with Buddhism, Tibetan medicine came under direct attack by Mao’s armed troops during the 1950s, especially after the failed Lhasa uprising in March 1959, when China forcibly annexed Tibet and implemented radical Communist reforms. The most prestigious Tibetan medical institution until then – the Chagpori Drophen Ling in Lhasa – was bombed and leveled, as were most other medical and monastic establishments during the following decade. Similarly, innumerable medical and religious scriptures were destroyed, and large numbers of doctors and monks were killed and imprisoned. In the words of one medical anthropologist and historian, “by 1973 Tibetan medicine as an institution had virtually disappeared” in Tibet (Janes, “Transformations” 20). Meanwhile, the Dalai Lama and some eighty thousand Tibetans had fled across the Himalayas to India – a passage that proved to be a veritable bottleneck through which only a fraction of Tibet’s medical knowledge, in the form of a handful of doctors and whatever texts they managed to carry, passed into exile. Both in Tibet and in exile, Tibetan medicine was therefore confronted with an unprecedented loss of knowledge held by experts, texts, training facilities, institutional structures, and the very plurality of local experience. Tibetan medical knowledge thus became fugitive in a geographical, political, and epistemological sense, and was reinscribed in a register of cultural loss and preservation.

This was an entirely new situation for Tibetan medicine, which – like Buddhism – constituted not only one of Tibet’s five major sciences, enjoying a high level of prestige and social status, but also served as a hegemonic institution through which the Central Tibetan state had pursued its political agenda (Schaeffer; Garrett). As such, it had been well organized through a network of powerful medical centers, a large and complex canon of authoritative texts, and a lively tradition of scholarship and debate. Until 1959, Tibetan medicine enjoyed a quasi monopoly on professional, pharmaceutical-based healthcare in Tibet, was widely known beyond Tibet’s borders for its efficacy and sophistication, and attracted both students and high-ranking patients from throughout Central Asia. In short, Tibetan medicine and Buddhism strongly informed Tibet’s cultural and political identity as a powerful civilization, with its systematic destruction by the Chinese striking a serious blow against the Tibetan nation.

From the very beginning, the Dalai Lama and his government-in-exile thus framed the loss of religious and medical knowledge within a discourse of cultural survival. This discourse found resonance not only in the international sphere (see Lopez; Dodin/Räther) but also among the Tibetan exile community, which began to focus its efforts – individual, institutional, and policy – on the preservation of

what it considered ‘Tibetan culture’, that is, a national identity revolving around the Mahayana Buddhist ethics of altruism and compassion (see Kloos, *Tibetan Medicine*). This was particularly true for Tibetan medicine, which found itself responsible for ensuring not only the physical survival of sick Tibetan refugees, but also the cultural survival of the Tibetan nation. Tibetan medicine, owing to this crucial dual role and traditional status as one of Tibet’s major sciences, soon came to be seen as a prime symbol and placeholder of the Tibetan culture it was meant to preserve. The preservation and potential loss of its own medical knowledge was thus crucial to – and to some extent even synonymous with – the preservation and loss of Tibetan ethics and culture at large, and consequently became the central and defining purpose of Tibetan medicine in exile.

In the 1960s, it had already become clear to the Dalai Lama that an engagement with modern science was key to the preservation of both Tibetan medicine and culture. Thus, in his speeches on the topic of Tibetan medicine from 1969 up to the present (compiled in Dalai Lama, *Srid zhi’i*), he has consistently exhorted its practitioners – also known as *amchi* – to “combine Western and Tibetan medicine,” to be “broad minded” (1978) and “compliant with modern times and current practices” (1982), to “seek the expertise and advice of modern medical science” (1987), “to tread the path of science” (1994), to “make innovative discoveries” (1995), “to research and evaluate Tibetan medicine through the prism of modern science” (1998), to “take the best bits of Western medical practices and create a fine blend” (2000), and to learn how “to explain Tibetan medicine in terms of Western medicine” (2006). Given the difficulties involved in reestablishing Tibetan medicine from scratch during the first decades in exile, it was not until the 1980s that its premier institution, the Dharamsala-based Men-Tsee-Khang, was in a position to heed the Dalai Lama’s advice. Even then, the task of conducting research was daunting for the Men-Tsee-Khang, whose doctors and staff lacked even the most rudimentary scientific training, and openly questioned the necessity of ‘proving’ their medicine by modern means.

Today, the exile Tibetan *amchi*’s perception of modern science has changed dramatically: modern science is – however reluctantly in some quarters – regarded as playing an essential role in the ‘preservation’ of Tibetan medicine and its knowledge. While the Men-Tsee-Khang occupies a leadership position in this regard – due mostly to its superior human and financial resources and its direct affiliation with the Dalai Lama – this perception is shared by virtually all practitioners of Tibetan medicine in South Asia and the West today, regardless of their institutional affiliation.<sup>3</sup> As one doctor told me, “It’s about the survival of Tibetan

3 There are four official Tibetan medical institutions operating in exile today, all of them located in North India: the Men-Tsee-Khang in Dharamsala, the medical faculty at the Central University for Tibetan Studies (CUTS) in Sarnath, the Chagpori Tibetan Medical Institute in Darjeeling, and the medical faculty at the Central Institute for Buddhist Studies in Choglamsar, Ladakh. So far, other than the Men-Tsee-Khang, only the medical faculty at CUTS has conducted small-scale clinical research. This is also the reason for the heavy reliance on interviews with Men-Tsee-Khang doctors in this essay. However, there are also

medicine in an age of science and skepticism. If we don't prove Tibetan medicine scientifically, people – even Tibetans – will stop taking it, and this great treasure of knowledge will get lost" (Dr. Tseten Mingyur, June 25, 2006, Dharamsala).<sup>4</sup> Another doctor added: "We don't have any doubts about our medicines. But nowadays, people are very intelligent. They want proof, documentation; they need paper!" (Dr. Jamyang Tashi, July 18, 2005, Kalimpong). What modern science could provide, then, was the gift of visibility, which could make Tibetan medicine not only acceptable and 'legible' (see Scott 9–83), but even attractive to those who needed proof in order to consider something scientifically valid. This, in turn, made modern science attractive to Tibetan amchi, who hoped to learn the art of making their knowledge, ethics, and culture appreciable by the world. In the words of Dr. Tenzin Nyima: "Modern science is like an ornament for traditional knowledge" (September 3, 2008, Dharamsala).

Consider this: dislocated from its usual position of superiority to a place within the Tibetans' own Buddhist epistemic framework, modern science is reinterpreted as an ornament (*rgyan*) to enhance the outward appearance of Tibetan knowledge without changing its inner substance; as a tool to instill faith in non-believers and thereby achieve international recognition, ensuring the long-term survival of Tibetan medicine. This is a far cry from science's own self-definition as a rational arbiter of truth vis-à-vis supposedly irrational phenomena like spirituality, faith, or belief. It is, however, completely in line with the amchi's overall goal of enlisting modernity in order to translate and incorporate it into the framework of their own postcolonial national culture. Stated in medical terms, in order to cure Tibetan medicine and culture, which were simultaneously threatened by modernity and suffered from a lack thereof, they transformed the potent but dangerous substance of modern science into an 'elixir of health and rejuvenation'.

Modern science here is clearly associated with modernity and Tibetan medicine with tradition. But in contrast to modern science's hegemonic discourse that monopolizes truth and dismisses 'traditional' forms of knowledge as mere 'beliefs' (Good; Pigg), exile Tibetan amchi see their medical tradition as an alternative science that is at least as valid – and valuable – as modernity's science. Regarding the two kinds of knowledge – traditional and modern – not as necessarily conflicting opposites but as mutually complementary sciences, amchi aim to engage with modernity on their own, Tibetan, terms. These involve 'taming' or 'subduing' the Other in order to incorporate it into a Tibetan (Buddhist) epistemic framework and use it for the Tibetans' purposes, as in the well-established Tibetan Buddhist figure of the ornament. While acknowledging the importance of engaging with modern science, most exile Tibetan amchi are convinced that this is first and foremost a political rather than a scientific requirement. As Dr. Tenzin

individual Tibetan *amchi* and experts who have been centrally involved in modern research on Tibetan medicine (see, e.g., Aschoff/Tashigang; Choedon et al.) – not counting the larger field of textual and literary research.

4 All interviews excerpted in this essay were conducted by the author.

Namdul from the Men-Tsee-Khang's Clinical Research Department said in a lecture on the topic (April 19, 2008, Dharamsala):

When we go to conferences and so on, we always encounter a lot of skepticism and doubt about Tibetan medicine: “How can you guys say that Tibetan medicine can be effective for diabetes or cancer?” At the end of the day, the big question is always whether we have done any scientific clinical studies, whether our medical system has been recognized by any government. [...] One thing I always try to tell these people – even our own doctors and students here – is that we need to look back in history. Tibetan medicine has made important advances through research and development. So we actually need to have a bit more confidence and realize that we already have the foundation.

If you look into the texts, the compounding of medicines, the practice, everything: without in-depth research in early times we would not have what we are seeing now. So they have done research. Today the big challenge for us is to do research that employs the Western scientific system. This is difficult, and in a way it's improper to try to insert the Western scientific approach into Tibetan medicine. So we need to see how we can do it, making sure that we keep the Tibetan medical tradition intact but are also able to do evidence-based research studies.

Indeed, Tibetan doctors in exile have been involved in a number of clinical studies, especially since the late 1990s. For example, between the late 1980s and 2010, the Men-Tsee-Khang's Clinical Research Department conducted ten clinical and three laboratory-based studies, including studies on cancer, diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, and hypertension. Not only Tibetan amchi, but also Western scholars interested in the encounter between Tibetan medicine and modern science have focused mostly on such clinical studies, especially in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and adjacent areas in China (see the works by Adams; Janes; and Craig). In this essay, however, I will shift the focus both geographically, to the underexplored context of Tibetan medicine in exile (that is, to India), and thematically, away from clinical trials to a much more fundamental aspect of Tibetan medicine's encounter with modern science: modern quality control. Hardly discussed and barely apparent to anyone but the most involved amchi, this effort to ensure, through modern means, a certain level and standard of quality and efficacy in the production of Tibetan medicines does not fit the ornament metaphor, but rather that of a silent revolution. As Tsewang Gyatso, a biologist who worked at the Men-Tsee-Khang's Materia Medica department until 2009, told me, “Actually, although everybody talks of research, our priority is the quality control of the medicines and raw materials” (December 31, 2007, Dharamsala).

## Quality Control and the Problem of Efficacy

In 1997, the Men-Tsee-Khang initiated a clinical trial on diabetes mellitus in cooperation with the All India Institute for Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in New Delhi, one of India's most prestigious medical institutions. This clinical trial was a breakthrough for the Men-Tsee-Khang in several ways: it was the first study yielding results that were not only promising but also statistically conclusive enough to be published as a letter of observation in the American Diabetes Association's journal *Diabetes Care* (see Namdul et al.). It also strengthened the Men-Tsee-Khang's relations with the AIIMS, whose doctors were enthusiastic about the results, and marked the beginning of modern quality control and efforts to standardize Tibetan medicines. While the study's success resulted in administrative limits on Tibetan medicine's engagement with science,<sup>5</sup> its shortcomings unexpectedly set in motion a process that would change Tibetan medicine more profoundly than clinical studies ever could. For the main problem that arose during the diabetes study was not one of research design or statistical validity – issues that had failed to attract the Men-Tsee-Khang administration's attention before – but one that concerned Tibetan medicine's efficacy. During the study, patients who initially responded well to the Tibetan pills complained that suddenly the same drug did not seem to work anymore. The amchi's traditional diagnoses using data derived from pulse diagnosis, urine analysis, and patient interviews concurred with these complaints, and were confirmed by the same biomedical tests that had previously demonstrated the Tibetan pills' efficacy. For the first time, Men-Tsee-Khang doctors were confronted with hard evidence that the efficacy of their medicines varied from batch to batch. It became clear that the standardization of their medicines was imperative, both for the sake of future clinical trials and out of responsibility toward their patients.

What should we think of this? Has the efficacy of Tibetan medicine always been unpredictable, has it always lacked adequate procedures of standardization and quality control, deficiencies that have only now come to light thanks to pharmaceutical mass production and modern science? To some extent, perhaps. It is true that traditionally there was no such thing as 'quality control' in the sense of a single, clearly defined process, although amchi can and do check their medicines' quality and efficacy by taste, sight, smell, and patient diagnosis. Rather, the quality of Tibetan medicine depended on the amchi's ethics – one could say, their character and motivation – which translated into how diligently they followed the prescribed methods of identifying, collecting, drying, cleaning, stor-

5 The Men-Tsee-Khang's administration at the time failed to understand the scientific results of the study and was unprepared for the enthusiasm these results created among the involved Indian biomedical researchers. According to one informant, the consequent decision to block any follow-up studies reflected the general fear of cultural dispossession and suspicions against 'overly interested' foreigners then prevalent among sections of the Tibetan exile society.

ing, and compounding their ingredients. These methods are clearly explained in classical Tibetan medical texts, such as the seventeenth-century *Shel gong shel phreng* by Deumar Geshe Tenzin Phuntsog (Deumar; see also Ridrag, and Men-Tsee-Khang), which also describe eight types of potency (*nus pa*) and their characteristics. Far from being confined to the mere examination of ingredients by taste, sight, and smell, this kind of ‘quality control’ thus formed the fundamental basis – and provided clear standards – for Tibetan pharmaceutical production. In the words of Dr. Tsewang Tamdin who at different times headed the Men-Tsee-Khang’s pharmaceutical department, college, and the entire institute as its director: “You could say that being ethical, being Buddhist, is the best quality control” (May 27, 2008, Dharamsala).

Certainly, these traditional methods of standardization and quality control never were – or needed to be – as accurate as modern technologies promise to be. But there is no doubt that they worked well enough for Tibetan medicine to become renowned in large parts of Asia during the past centuries and, lately, around the world. There is also no doubt that even today, the Men-Tsee-Khang takes its traditional methods of standardization, as well as its Buddhist ethical ideals and practices with regard to medicine production, extremely seriously. If neither the traditional methods of quality control and standardization *per se*, nor their lack of implementation could be blamed for the fluctuating results of the pills prescribed by Men-Tsee-Khang practitioners, then what was the problem? And why did the Men-Tsee-Khang end up embracing modern quality control?

To begin to answer these questions, it is necessary to consider the importance of modernity for nationalist struggles like that of Tibet. As mentioned above, Tibetan medicine’s main purpose in exile was not so much to cure individual patients – although that was what it did on a day-to-day basis – but rather to heal an ailing Tibetan culture and nation. However, if Tibetan medicine in fact embodied and represented that culture, then, according to this logic, it was sick itself – something easily confirmed by a historical glance at its desperate conditions during the 1960s and 1970s (see Kloos, “History and Development”). This meant, in turn, that its traditional formulas alone were incapable of healing that culture or the Tibetan nation, and that it therefore needed to look elsewhere for help. Enter modernity, and with it, science. In Gyan Prakash’s words, “science has always been asked to accomplish a great deal – to authorize an enormous leap into modernity, and anchor the entire edifice of modern culture, identity, politics, and economy” (Prakash 12). Indeed, the crucial element the Tibetans lacked, but that was indispensable in their quest for cultural and national survival – and hence the preservation of their ‘traditions’ – was modernity. We have thus returned to the opening statement of Dr. Tenzin Thaye from the Men-Tsee-Khang’s Pharmacy Department, who was later appointed Visiting Physician to His Holiness the Dalai Lama: “When we lose the potency of tradition, then we need the help of modernity.”

Almost from its inception, Tibetan medicine in exile has undergone a gradual modernization process. Initially, this was due to the current Dalai Lama's personal initiative to reform and modernize Tibetan society as a whole and Tibetan medicine in particular – something his predecessor, the Thirteenth Dalai Lama, had already tried but largely failed to do (see Van Vleet; Choelo Thar 3–41; Goldstein). The condition of exile, however catastrophic otherwise, proved to be a fertile ground for the Fourteenth Dalai Lama to implement his visions of reform. Thus, in the 1960s, the reestablished Men-Tsee-Khang in Dharamsala was not structured like a monastic community (as its mother institution, the old Lhasa Mentsikhang, had been until 1959), but as a modern secular college and governmental health center, training predominantly lay students – including women – and in the beginning providing free, and then later inexpensive health care to the public. In the late 1960s, earlier than its counterpart in Lhasa, it mechanized pharmaceutical production, and during the 1970s adopted a capitalist business model and started generating profits, which it reinvested in Tibetan medicine's further development. By the 1980s, however, the Men-Tsee-Khang's sheer success, and Tibetan medicine's increasing importance to the exile Tibetan political cause, overtook the Dalai Lama's initiative as the main force behind modernization. Entering nationalist politics and the capitalist market, Tibetan medicine was called upon to modernize not only in material terms, for example, through the purchasing of new machinery, but also as an institution representing Tibetan knowledge, ethics, and culture. In other words, the more Tibetan medicine was forced to modernize in order to fulfill its role in advancing the Tibetan cause, the more it came, by virtue of its success, to represent an assumed 'traditional' exile Tibetan political and cultural identity. To mobilize the world on the side of the Tibetan political struggle, Tibetan medicine needed to acquire financial resources, secure solid legal status as well as scientific validity, and earn the faith of its own people. That is, it had to remake itself as a modern alternative health resource while at the same time remaining 'traditional' and uniquely Tibetan. Two of the solutions comprised dressing Tibetan medicine in modern garb with the help of clinical trials, and to providing modern packaging for its pharmaceuticals (see Kloos, "Navigating"). Others included transforming Tibetan medicine into a clearly defined 'medical system' – partly with the help of science – that could be regulated, standardized, and legally recognized (see Kloos, "Medical System"). Most importantly, however, its practice needed to ensure the reliability of its treatments in a modern context, for which, as we will see, modern means proved necessary. In other words, the most central domain in which tradition and modernity met, and needed to be negotiated, was that of efficacy.

There is a good reason for this. Most patients care or know little about Tibetan medicine's status as a symbol for Tibetan culture and civilization, much less its power to heal the Tibetan nation. What they do care about is its medical potency, its ability to cure their immediate physical or mental ailments. For all their nationalism, faith, and religiosity, Tibetans in exile are eminently pragmatic.

Like anyone faced with pain and suffering, they judge a medicine by whether and how it works: no matter how ‘Tibetan’ it might be, treatment is useless if it does not remedy their diseases. Tibetan medicine’s popularity and dissemination thus strongly depend on its medical efficacy, as evidenced by the spread of Men-Tsee-Khang branch clinics in urban India, which is largely driven by local demand and sponsorship in the wake of news of spectacular cures.<sup>6</sup> Efficacy is the indicator of Tibetan medicine’s soundness and strength, and it is also crucial to the extent that doctors consider it the true locus of their practice’s identity, its traditional Tibetanness. Ultimately, the preservation of Tibetan medicine is nothing but the preservation of its efficacy. As a consequence, when the Men-Tsee-Khang discovered that the medical efficacy of its pills fluctuated, despite its best efforts to ensure their quality and potency through traditional means, those findings presented a serious challenge: at stake was not merely the health of a few individuals or the success of a clinical trial, but Tibetan medicine and culture themselves.

### **The Impotence of Tradition**

Given the strong connection between Tibetan medicine’s clinical efficacy on the one hand, and its cultural and political efficacy on the other (see Kloos, “Alchemie”), it is not surprising that the otherwise conservative Men-Tsee-Khang administration decided to introduce into its pharmaceutical unit, at considerable cost and against the objections of several senior amchi, modern quality control technologies. But we are still left with the question of why the traditional methods of quality control no longer worked. For this, let us return once more to Tenzin Thaye’s statement: “When we lose the potency of tradition, then we need the help of modernity.” Most obviously, what Tenzin Thaye meant by ‘tradition’ is Tibetan medicine, the potency and efficacy of which is in danger of being lost. As he explained why this was so, he quickly arrived at the issue of quality control: the efficacy of Tibetan medicine is lost when traditional methods of quality control lose their ability to ensure the potency of the ingredients. Furthermore, as described above, traditional quality control is strongly connected to Buddhist ethics. ‘Tradition’ in Tenzin Thaye’s statement thus not only refers to Tibetan medicine, nor just to specific processes that we might today call ‘traditional quality control’. At the deepest level, ‘tradition’ for Tenzin Thaye means Tibetan Buddhist ethics, with altruism and compassion at its core.

6 For example, the Navi Mumbai branch clinic was opened after Men-Tsee-Khang doctors cured a boy with terminal lymphoplasmic leukemia. The Chennai branch clinic was opened after the successful treatment of metastatic lymph cancer in a retired Indian army colonel. There are similar stories behind the Men-Tsee-Khang’s Ahmedabad branch clinic and several others, while the New Delhi branch thrives on its reputation of achieving positive results in the treatment of asthma, diabetes, and other conditions.

This has been confirmed repeatedly by other exile Tibetan amchi, like Dr. Tsering Wangdue, who told me: “What is tradition, after all? Tradition is basically compassion, it’s the motivation. If we lose our tradition, it means we lose our compassion, and then we have lost the most important thing” (June 24, 2008, Dharamsala). Indeed, not just the term ‘tradition’, but Tibetan identity and culture as a whole are commonly equated by exile Tibetans, from the Dalai Lama down to illiterate farmers, with the Tibetan Buddhist ethics of altruism and compassion. So how, exactly, is the potency of tradition – of Tibetan medicine, of traditional quality control, of Tibetan Buddhist ethics, of Tibetanness itself – lost, as Tenzin Thaye claims? And what kind of help can modernity provide?

Ironically, it is Tibetan medicine’s extraordinary growth and success during the past decade that has rendered its traditional concepts and practices increasingly impracticable today. There are, first of all, the direct pharmaceutical consequences of Tibetan medicine’s recent entrance into the capitalist market, its rapid economic development, and the attendant shift to pharmaceutical mass production. Technical questions arise in the industrialization of any medicine: the necessary compromises between in this case Buddhist scriptures and the factory floor directly affect the end products’ potency (see Craig; Saxer; and Banerjee). What is more, with the rapidly mounting need for raw materials to produce ever-growing quantities of medicines, traditional plant collecting in the mountains by the doctors themselves has become insufficient, and, consequently, of less importance. In 2007–8, for example, Men-Tsee-Khang doctors and students only collected 2.7 percent of the 52 tons of raw materials used during that year, with another 8.2 percent donated mostly by Tibetan Buddhists from different Himalayan regions. The remaining 89 percent of the Men-Tsee-Khang’s raw materials were procured from various other dealers and markets. This left the institute with little knowledge and control over how, where, and when those materials were collected, cleaned, dried, stored, and transported.

Although Tibetan doctors and medical institutions have always purchased or bartered for a certain percentage of their raw materials from traders or villagers, the unprecedented rise in the proportion of those purchases exposes them to capitalist market forces and constitutes a major change in the practice of Tibetan medicine. Dr. Tenzin Namdul from the Men-Tsee-Khang’s Clinical Research Department explained the situation like this:

We are never saying that in our ancient medical texts there is no proper way of ensuring the quality of the raw materials, or of standardizing the finished pills. But we need to understand that with today’s global changes, so many herbs are becoming endangered species. Even if they are available, they tend to have far less efficacy than they used to have earlier. Take amla [Indian gooseberry], for example, which is a widely used ingredient not only in Tibetan medicine but also in Ayurveda, Unani, and Siddha. Now if I get it from Kangra this time, then next time from Amritsar, and the third time from Delhi – the same ingredi-

ent, we get it from three different places and agencies. We can't be sure about its potency, whether they have the same qualities, how they were dried and stored... So to make sure that we maintain the quality, we need to have tools to check whether they have the same potency. (April 19, 2008, Dharamsala)

Adding to this, Dr. Tenzin Thaye pointed out: "Nowadays it's not like before. All the plants, all the medical ingredients are changing [...] not because of nature, but because of the people who are selling them. If they want to make money, they may mix other plants in, so one really has to be careful" (September 19, 2008, Dharamsala).

In a nutshell, losing control over the first stages through which the raw materials pass on their way to the market is nothing less than a loss of control over quality. It is difficult to utilize traditional monitoring methods to determine whether plants have been collected, cleaned, dried, and stored correctly, or whether they have been polluted with pesticides or other chemicals. As traders struggle to satisfy the huge demand for raw materials created by the recent boom in herbal medicines and products in India and abroad (whether under the name of Tibetan medicine, Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, or Traditional Chinese Medicine), it is almost inevitable that the quality of their herbs will be inferior to those collected by amchi. Furthermore, the growing commercial exploitation of wildcrafted plants also leads to an environmental degradation that affects the size, quantity, and quality of herbs the amchi are able to collect, even if they do travel to the mountains and gather the plants themselves.

As Tenzin Thaye mentioned, inferior quality of medical ingredients may also be a direct result of the traders' attempts to maximize their profits by unethical means. Examples of such cheating include failing to properly dry and clean the plants so that they weigh more, selling old or deteriorated plant material, and adulterating or totally replacing expensive raw materials with cheaper ones. As altruism and compassion are lost in the market place of greed and corruption, the potency of Tibetan medicine suffers. Therefore, it is not that traditional quality control is inadequate today, but that it has become impossible to practice in today's market economy. The only solution to ensure a certain level of quality, then, is the use of modern scientific methods, such as microscopic and chemical analyses, with which adulterations, moisture levels, and pollution can be detected and measured.

There is yet another problem with buying raw materials from the free market. As traders source their herbs from different and often changing locations all over South and Central Asia and even beyond, what is in question is not only the quality of the raw materials but also their type, that is, their species. By their own admission, many amchi acknowledge that traditional Tibetan plant taxonomy is imprecise and often confusing, with different names given to the same species (as defined by Western taxonomy) or different species conflated under one Tibetan

name (see Shankar et al. 1501). As long as doctors who possessed generations of experience collected the herbs locally this situation was not a problem. Nor is it an issue with a large percentage of the raw materials bought on today's market, the bulk of which consists of common food spices like cloves or cardamom. However, in the case of certain mountain herbs, dried barks and roots, or plant material that has already been processed into powder form, Tibetan doctors find it difficult to discern whether or not the raw materials they are getting are the ones they actually want.

The amchi have found two solutions to deal with these dilemmas. One is to cultivate plants that are more expensive, rare, or difficult to identify. This is an attractive alternative because it is potentially cheaper, environmentally sustainable, avoids the mechanism of the capitalist market place, and thus helps the amchi regain control over the most sensitive aspects of their herbal supplies. Indeed, the Men-Tsee-Khang has purchased six acres of land near Darjeeling for this purpose, and other individuals and organizations have also begun to cultivate medicinal herbs, especially in Ladakh. The problem with this solution is that so far it has not worked. While there have been some successes in cultivating plants that are already easily available and identifiable, it is exceedingly difficult to cultivate rare mountain herbs, and all attempts to do so have failed. The other, more practical answer is to employ the help of modern science in the form of Linnaean taxonomy, microscopic analysis, or chromatography. Still, in many cases this is not as easy as it may sound: if done properly, even the seemingly simple task of matching or translating Tibetan plant names into Western taxonomy can take years of research (see Kletter/Kriechbaum, and Shankar et al.).

## **The Impotence of Science**

Quality control involves more than ruling out pollution and botanical confusion, however. Rather, its central concern is the standardization of medical efficacy, something the Men-Tsee-Khang's diabetes study demonstrated all too clearly. Doctors, patients, and researchers all need to be sure that the medication prescribed, ingested, or tested yesterday will have the same effect tomorrow. Yet, while modern science can help in detecting various kinds of contamination in raw materials or finished pills, the standardization of Tibetan medicine's potency reveals the limits of modern technologies as much as it shows their indispensability. For all its technological sophistication and promises of making Tibetan medicine and its efficacy visible, conventional, reductionist modern science is unable to check, measure, or ensure the pharmaceutical potency of Tibetan formulas and their ingredients – something that experienced amchi can easily do by simply relying on their knowledge and the faculties of taste, smell, and other senses. Modern quality control standards, however, restrict their focus to major active ingredients, and thus ignore traditional collection protocols, processing

techniques, storage, and shelf life, all of which are an essential part of Tibetan standards (Shankar et al. 1504). Furthermore, biopharmaceutical tests are unable to analyze the individual and synergetic effects of up to one hundred sixty different herbal, mineral, metal, or animal ingredients contained in some Tibetan pills (Harilal 50). Put another way, the potency and efficacy of Tibetan medicine is beyond the grasp of science – immeasurable, invisible, irreducible to a particular chemical, molecule, or active ingredient. Even if it could be reduced to the presence of certain chemicals, Tsewang Gyatso explained that for these materials, “there are no established norms or standards that we can rely on to check if the [chemical] values are in the normal range or not” (December 31, 2007, Dhar-amsala).

Yet, it is clear that modern science is necessary in order to standardize potencies and ensure the safety and quality of mass produced medicines. As the diabetes study showed, it is difficult for amchi to compare and regulate potencies diachronically. Moreover, with traditional methods alone, they are unable to establish any reproducible standards of efficacy or any reliable system of documentation acceptable under national or international drug regulations. Indeed, this is not simply a problem for Tibetan medicine, but for most pharmaceutical-based systems of ‘traditional medicine’, leading the Indian scholar Darshan Shankar and others to propose “intercultural quality standards” (Shankar et al.), which would combine modern and traditional sciences without compromising the integrity and standards of either. Exile Tibetan amchi have thus begun to implement modern and traditional approaches to ensure and ‘preserve’ the quality of their medicines. The idea is to first check the potency of an ingredient or finished pill by traditional means, and then (if acceptable) conduct a chemical analysis to establish the values of its chemical composition. Over the years, by comparing the values of different batches of the same ingredient or medicine with each other, it may be possible to establish chemical norms that reflect and correspond to the amchi’s expertise. In short, such intercultural quality standards, through the figures and graphs of modern science, would make Tibetan pharmaceutical knowledge visible and legible.

No doubt, establishing such standards is complicated and labor intensive work. Yet, since the establishment of a new quality control laboratory at the Men-Tsee-Khang’s pharmaceutical unit in 2009, its two-person staff (trained in microbiology) has not only tested samples of each batch of raw materials and finished pills for moisture levels, mold, and fungus, but has also begun compiling chemical analyses in order to create and systematize such standards. Since most of the one hundred seventy types of medicine used by the Men-Tsee-Khang are only produced once a year (or even less frequently), in its fifth year this effort is still in its beginning stages, and is mostly limited to documentation rather than a transformation of pharmaceutical practice. As Dr. Tenzin Thaye told me,

TT: Actually we work fully according to the tradition. But for documentation, we also try to develop the other way, like scientific tests. For example now, when we are drying the pills, our doctors check whether they are dry or not by chewing them – in the Buddhist way. But for quite some time now, the scientists are testing them too. When we say, “ok the pills are dry,” then they also test them, to collect some documentation. Sometimes, with some medicines that are very oily, it happens that we say they are dry, but when they check them, they say the oil content or moisture is high.

SK: And then what happens? You say it’s dry, and they say it’s not dry...

TT: They say that the moisture is a little high. But it may be because of the nature of the plants. So they just note it down.

SK: And do you dry them more because of that?

TT: No, no. Actually, the doctors and people who work there are very efficient, they have many years’ experience, chewing and testing the pills... (June 24, 2008, Dharamsala)

In other words, for the most part, modern quality control at the Men-Tsee-Khang serves, like the clinical trials, as an ‘ornament’ – producing stacks of paper documenting (one could say, ‘decorating’) every step of the pharmaceutical production process, making the Men-Tsee-Khang’s medicines more attractive to non-Tibetans, instilling faith in skeptics. With the goal of securing legal recognition and establishing an export market in mind, the Men-Tsee-Khang has been working to implement Good Manufacturing Practices (GMP) in its pharmacy for several years now. Given the high standards and size of its pharmacy on the one hand, and the relative ease of meeting Indian GMPs (which were designed with India’s own medical traditions in mind) on the other, the Men-Tsee-Khang’s production facilities are already almost fully GMP-compliant. What is missing, however, are proper documentation procedures. Indeed, as Tsewang Gyatso and Tenzin Namdul told me on different occasions, it is exactly this consistent and comprehensive documentation that remains the most difficult requirement for the amchi to meet – partly because of the sheer amount of work and logistics required, and partly because they do not see any value in such an undertaking beyond complying with cumbersome legal regulations.

But despite Dr. Tenzin Thaye’s assurance that traditional methods are still being followed, the influence of the knowledge generated through modern quality control procedures is growing, at times directly interfering with the production process. For example, there have been occasions when whole batches of medicines have been discarded based on the advice of the laboratory staff. Not surprisingly, this gradual transfer of power away from traditionally trained, experienced amchi to young college graduates with degrees in natural sciences has caused concerns among the older practitioners. Dr. Tsering Dorjee from the Materia Medica Department, for example, told me:

I sometimes feel very doubtful about the scientific results. If we say, “science is modern and therefore it has to be accepted” – I don’t think so. It still needs experience too. And the basic, basic, basic thing is to have a good heart. Also, sometimes people say that according to science, something is the case. But on what kind of scientific basis do they say that? Is the basis really firm and true, and were the experiments that have been done in the past – if they have been done at all – really reliable? And how reliable will this knowledge remain in the future? Science is changing all the time, knowledge is constantly upgrading. So we cannot depend on scientific methods one hundred percent. Therefore, I feel that whether in the case of raw materials or finished products, the doctors should be the main ones in charge. Not the scientists, which sadly is sometimes done here at the Men-Tsee-Khang. Personally, I do not agree with this at all. Doctors who have a lot of experience should control this. If they need some backup from the scientists, they can tell them to do tests. And then they can combine these two knowledges, and say what is ok and what is not. This should happen on the basis of a good heart, a good motivation. (September 11, 2008, Dharamsala)

Dr. Tsering Dorjee was worried that the doctors’ traditional experience is being increasingly subordinated to modern education. But even more than that, he had apprehensions that Tibetan medicine’s Buddhist ethics – that is, its Tibetan identity, located in the doctors’ “good hearts” – was slowly being replaced by the cold machines of modern science. Nevertheless, most people at the Men-Tsee-Khang insisted that this was not a matter of replacement but of complementing. Modern quality control technologies might make up for a lack of Buddhist ethics in the case of Indian herb traders and business people, but no amount of documentation or number of lab tests could replace Buddhist ethics among the Tibetan amchi. To the amchi, Ayurveda provided a particularly illustrative negative example: far more modernized than Tibetan medicine, it was seen as corrupt and consequently of little medical use. Tsering Tashi, who would become the Men-Tsee-Khang’s director in 2012, told me in 2009:

They have lots of scandals in Ayurvedic factories, you know. Despite all their control systems: first they have to [issue] a tender for herb suppliers, then they have scientists with all sorts of equipment to monitor the quality, so many things! We have none of that. But somehow, dirt [gets] into their medicine! [laughs] On the other hand, we are somehow able to control that. (May 19, 2009, Evanston, IL)

Yet, Dr. Tsering Dorjee’s misgivings are valid, as the biggest threat to Tibetan medicine and culture today is not seen in the Chinese state anymore, but in the amchi’s moral decline brought about by temptations of the capitalist market. Thus, an article in the English-language exile Tibetan magazine *Tibetoday* argues, “Unfortunately, the Tibetan *Sowarigpa* that once survived the ideological holocaust of Mao’s China is now facing its toughest enemy and opponent both inside

and outside Tibet. Physicians [...] maintain that the ills of greed, neglect and the commercialization of the *Sowarigpa* tradition in and outside Tibet would do more harm in the long run when it comes to preserving the authenticity and the professional expertise of the *Sowarigpa* tradition” (Chukora 14). Indeed, if the amchi’s motivation shifted from helping others to making a lot of money quickly, as was – at least in the exile Tibetans’ perceptions – slowly but increasingly the case, then Tibetan medicine was going down the same undesirable route Ayurveda had taken some decades earlier. The results of this scenario were clear to all: Tibetan medicine’s efficacy – and reputation – would diminish due to the amchi’s desire to maximize their profits. This would not only threaten the long-term survival of Tibetan medical knowledge, but also harm Tibetan culture and the Tibetan nationalist cause. While modern quality control was unavoidable in a broader, non-Buddhist context of capitalism and science, Buddhist ethics remained the foundation of Tibetan medicine’s efficacy by ensuring virtuous behavior where it mattered most, that is, among the amchi. Consequently, in recent years the Men-Tsee-Khang has placed increasing importance on Buddhist ethics, trying to instill in its students and amchi a sense of social responsibility that blends Buddhist ethics with patriotism.

The limitations of modern science are, however, not confined to the arena of preventing corruption and malpractice but extend to its core functions of measuring, discovering, and making visible. As indispensable as modern quality control has become in a context of pharmaceutical mass production, the capitalist market, and national and international drug regulations, it cannot measure or control Tibetan medicine’s pharmaceutical potency. Dr. Tenzin Thaye’s idea of establishing modern scientific standards for Tibetan medicine’s efficacy is revealing because it implies the reverse of his earlier statement. It may well be true that modernity can help when the potency of tradition is lost, but this help is seriously limited by modernity’s inability to understand this tradition. Ironically, modern science is asked to prevent the loss of something it cannot grasp, and to make visible what it cannot see. As a consequence, it requires the help of the tradition it is supposed to assist in the first place. In a reversal of Tenzin Thaye’s quote, it is thus also true that modernity, confronted with its own impotence, needs the help of ‘tradition’. The amchi’s expert knowledge remains critical to any serious effort to develop modern quality control that actually works for Tibetan medicine.

## Conclusion: Fugitive No More

Volker Scheid, in his study *Currents of Tradition in Chinese Medicine*, argues that ‘tradition’ is not a static entity but a process that has to change constantly in order to continue. This resonates with the composite Tibetan term for ‘tradition’ or ‘traditional,’ *srol gyun*, where *srol* (tradition, system, custom, habitual practice, habit) indicates tradition’s processual nature, and *rgyun* (continuity, stream, ever-

lasting) indicates its continuity. It also resonates with the views of some of the most prominent exile Tibetan intellectuals. On a rainy January day, Tenzin Tsundue, the well-known Tibetan poet-activist, told me:

These days, whatever someone does – play the flute, practice medicine, whatever – they say it’s to preserve our culture. Of course, I am Tibetan too, and I understand that in our situation there’s a justified fear of losing our culture. But what is Tibetan culture? Is it what we had in Tibet before 1959? If you just preserve culture the way it was at a certain point in time, it becomes redundant. Then it’s not culture, it’s history; it’s like something in a museum. Culture is alive, though, and therefore it has to change, you can’t prevent that. And not everything about our culture, the way it was before the Chinese invaded us, was good. So we have to evolve, keep what’s good and develop or change the rest. In my opinion, this is the only way our culture – any culture – can survive. (January 16, 2008, Dharamsala)

Without a doubt, Tibetan medicine has to move forward in order to survive and remain relevant. And certainly it has advanced, from an unknown regional medical tradition struggling to endure in the 1960s to today’s thriving alternative health resource, which is rapidly expanding worldwide. Tibetan medicine’s singular state as a fugitive knowledge was key to its radical transformation and global spread in the later part of the twentieth century. It was precisely the Tibetan refugees’ concern for cultural survival and the preservation of knowledge in exile that mandated its engagement with modernity and acted as a catalyst for change. As a result, Tibetan medicine has regained some of its old status as a hegemonic knowledge in its own right. Fugitive no more, today it is not only emerging as a multimillion dollar knowledge-industry, but also represents the intellectual and cultural power of Tibet in Asia and the world.

This development, however, has ushered in a new range of problems, regarded by exile Tibetans as new threats to Tibetan medicine’s survival. On their own, Tibetan medicine’s knowledge, traditions, and pills are indeed losing potency in the modern world of GMP regulations, capitalism, and mass production. Requiring new tools, new technologies, and a fresh understanding of their own professional knowledge and expertise, practitioners have turned to modern science for help. Yet, contrary to most clinical studies that have been conducted so far, modern pharmaceutical quality control goes beyond merely decorating Tibetan traditions with the ornament of science. Rather, the amchi’s engagement with modern science in the domain of quality control leaves both sides redefined and perhaps – existing power inequities and frictions notwithstanding – even reinvigorated. Today, modern technologies and science have become an existential condition for the very core of Tibetan medicine’s identity, that is, its ethics and efficacy. It has become impossible for contemporary amchi to ensure the safety, quality, and efficacy of their medicines – and thus fulfill their ethical obligation of providing the

best possible care to their patients – by traditional means alone. It is the resulting insertion of modern scientific concepts and methods into the very foundations of Tibetan medical knowledge and practice that constitutes Tibetan medicine’s ‘silent revolution’. Yet, just as Tibetan medicine’s Buddhist ethics, epistemic methods, and centuries of experience have come to depend on modern science for their continued existence, they emerge as more important than ever before in the effort to preserve not only the medical, but also the cultural and political efficacy of Tibetan medicine and the Tibetan nation. As such, they are no longer ‘tradition’, but constitute the product of Tibetan medicine’s efforts to preserve culture and help the world: an alternative, uniquely Tibetan modernity.

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**SPECULATIVE KNOWLEDGE  
IN COLONIAL AMERICA**



## CHAPTER SEVEN

# The Morality of the Moon. Indigenous Knowledge and Enlightenment Science in the Works of Fray Manuel Antonio de Rivas

RYAN A. KASHANIPOUR

Señor Bachiller: we have received a letter here on this world of the moon on the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month of Epiphi Nabonasar, in the lunar year 2510. The earthman that writes has the title of the Observer of Lunar Movements and he describes the syzygies and quadrates of the moon with Greek, Jewish, Egyptian, Arabic, and Persian neomenias released in the common year of the Lord 1773. In his letter, the Observer writes with sarcasm, cleverly dropping in erudition, and nothing that is vulgar. However, do you believe, most exalted Señor Bachiller, that earthling does not know that aerodynamic laws are codified here or what hemisphere this site is located within? Well, it is because these things are ignored in his earthly day.

Manuel Antonio de Rivas, *Syzygias y cuadraturas lunares* (1776)

On the twentieth of February 1776, officials of the Holy Office of the Inquisition of Mexico issued the first of eight petitions censoring the scientific writings of a Franciscan friar known as Manuel Antonio de Rivas.<sup>1</sup> From 1773 to 1777, inquisitors, theologians, and lawyers investigated the friar on charges of proposing heretical “perverse doctrines” that touched on religious principles and natural philosophy. A longtime priest of the province of Yucatán, Rivas was well known for his “acerbic wit” and vociferous criticisms of the state of the colonies (17r). In particular, the friar penned inflammatory critiques that described the moral decay and intellectual apathy of the colony’s elite society, integrating indigenous mediums and the rhetoric of the Enlightenment. Several of these works were brought before the Holy Office as evidence of Rivas’s heretical propositions,

1 The records of this investigation are housed in Mexico City in the Archivo General de la Nación, Inquisición 61, volumen 1187, expediente 2, folios 1–161, “El señor inquisidor fiscal de este santo oficio contra Fray Manuel Antonio del orden de San Francisco ex-defindor de San Jose de Yucatan, por proposiciones.” All translations are mine unless otherwise noted.

including two Maya-language pamphlets detailing transgressions of members of the Franciscan Order, an almanac charting the movement of the heavens, and a futuristic fable detailing a journey to the moon, the last two of which prompted the filing of formal charges. These works, in particular the fable, outraged numerous members of the Inquisition with their “infernal language” and implicit ideas that were “opposed to the faith and good customs” (17v).

Rivas’s texts illustrate the tenuous relationship between morality and scientific discourse in the eighteenth century and they also stand out as representations of the blending of local, indigenous traditions and Enlightenment philosophy in the early modern Spanish colonial world. In the Maya-language pamphlets, Rivas skewered the failings of the clerical leaders of the colony. Their personal transgressions, particularly lewd sexual acts, served as symbols of the debased creole activities and practices in colonial Mexico. In the almanac, the friar celebrated the power of scientific observation and experimentation in charting the movement of the celestial bodies. Astronomy provided a means to directly engage in Enlightenment science through the production of knowledge. Finally, Rivas exposed the moral discourse of early modern scientific thought in the short manuscript “*Syzygias y cuadraturas lunares, ajustadas al Meridiano de Mérida de Yucatán por un Anctítona, o habitador de la Luna, y dirigidas al Bachiller Don Abrosio de Echeverria, entonador, que ha sido de Kyries funerales en la Parroquia de el Jesús de dicha Ciudad, y presente Profesor de Logarithmica en el Pueblo de Mama de la Peninsula de Yucatan*” (Lunar Syzygies and Quadrates Adjusted to the Meridian of Mérida of Yucatán by an Anctítona, or inhabitant of the moon, and directed to the Bachiller Don Abrosio de Echeverria, former psalmist of Kyrie funerals in the Parish of Jesús in this city and now professor of Logarithms in the town of Mama on the Peninsula of Yucatán). The text appears as a complex series of letters written by an inhabitant of the moon in the year 2510. As the first work of science fiction written in Latin America, official reactions ranged from befuddlement to indignation. Among members of the Holy Office of the Inquisition, Rivas’s exaltation of the morality of science at the expense of religious traditions caused great consternation, which resulted in the silencing of the friar.

The works of Rivas, which lay buried in the records of the Mexican Inquisition for centuries, raise questions about the importance of local ideas in the development of the discourse of colonial science. At home among both the indigenous communities of the region and Enlightenment scientists of the age, Rivas carefully tracked the movement of the Sun, Moon, stars, and other celestial bodies. His almanac represented the transcultural mixing of Spanish and Maya approaches to astronomy and astrology. He recorded the changes of the seasons and the movement of the heavens to celebrate science through experimentation and observation. How did local views, particularly indigenous perspectives, find their way into the natural philosophy of a Spanish priest? Furthermore, how were claims of morality wedded into ideas of science? In public pronouncements, particularly a series of Maya-language pamphlets, Rivas decried the depravity of the

colonies by detailing the sins of individual members of the province's clerical leadership. As a utopian-themed work of science fiction, *Syzigias y cuadraturas* illustrates how the discourses of morality and science were intertwined. Though more subtle, in his fanciful, futuristic fable of the *Syzigias y cuadraturas*, Rivas critiques the intellectual failings of the entire colonial administration.

Few scholars have dealt with Rivas and his works. Pablo González Casanova, the first to examine Rivas's records in nearly three centuries, noted the *Syzigias y cuadraturas* as an obscure piece of colonial fiction. Most, however, regard Rivas's tale of the moon solely as Latin America's first work of "science fiction." For example, Miguel Ángel Fernández Delgado called it an example of the ongoing conflicts within the Franciscan Order in late colonial Yucatán, characterizing the narrative as "proto-science fiction" (18). Ross Larson, on the other hand, defined it as Baroque-era fantasy while, more recently, Carmen Galán described it as the product of a Baroque rationalist. Pete Sigal examined the gendered language of Rivas's Maya-language pamphlets as a means of exploring the so-called sexual conquest of indigenous populations. These narrow conceptions of the friar and his manuscript ignore broader implications of his work, the local environs in which they were produced, and the overall arc of the Spanish colonial system in the eighteenth century. Nevertheless, while there has been growing interest in Rivas, there has been no scholarly attempt to deal with the Inquisition case and the friar's works as a whole.

This essay attempts to consider the work of Manuel Antonio de Rivas as a case that reflects one of the many moments of contestation during the establishment of scientific and moral knowledge in the early modern world. Rivas, a peninsular Spaniard working in the province of Yucatán, fell far outside of the creole centers of knowledge and authority. His vision of science, however, exemplified the significant but overlooked place of moral discourse in colonial Spanish rhetoric and thought. Moreover, immersed in the indigenous world, he integrated native and Enlightenment perspectives to call for reforms of the religious and intellectual conditions in the colonies.

## Knowledge and Power

Manuel Antonio de Rivas challenged colonial institutions of power using the rhetoric of science and popular morality. As Pierre Bourdieu has postulated, the social relations of power constitute pivotal features in the development of early modern science. "The history of science," he argued, "is a social field like all others — with its relations of force, its powers, its struggles and profits, its generic mechanisms such as those that regulate the selection of newcomers or the competition between the various producers" (6). The ideas and practices of science developed as contingent sets of processes that navigated relations of power. Bourdieu claimed that Enlightenment intellectuals of the eighteenth century seized upon the

discourse of reason, rationality, and authority in the public arena to make claims of universal and moral validity in order to gain social capital. In this light, Rivas's writings illustrate the importance of localized understandings of morality in the construction of scientific knowledge. While embracing the practices of observation and experimentation, at the same time he also postulated a set of moral critiques of the state of colonial society.

Historians of science have long prioritized elite institutions and urban political centers in the production of scientific knowledge in the early modern world. Bruno Latour, for instance, claimed that scientific knowledge came through the "cycles of accumulation" in which ideas of science were exchanged in metropolitan spaces, particularly European centers of wealth and power (219). Following Bourdieu, historians of science have stressed the significance of public discourse. Steven Shapin and Simon Schaffer, for instance, detailed the relevance of mores and modes of scholarly interaction in elite European institutions. In response to these European-centered approaches, Latin American scholars have noted both the importance and distinctiveness of New World approaches to science. Antonio Lafuente and Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra have, for example, revised long-standing assumptions about the absence of Spanish colonial influences on a host of areas, including botany, cartography, cosmography, ecology, and other fields. Spanish colonial representations of nature, race, and society in part laid the groundwork for the epistemological changes of the Scientific Revolution. Clerics, inspired by Spanish Humanism in the metropolis of Mexico City, were active participants in epistemological debates about the pertinence of Amerindian knowledge systems that crisscrossed the Atlantic World. In public salons and societies, creoles wove utilitarianism, tradition, and patriotism into the colonial science of the eighteenth century. Creole intellectuals in Bourbon Mexico, as Lafuente and Cañizares-Esguerra demonstrated, attempted to meld native ideas with European practices to create a patriotic science that was both traditional and modern. Colonial Latin American science thus marshaled useful, functional aspects of indigenous knowledge systems and built creole knowledge systems rooted in elite urban institutions. Science was, in short, utilitarian, urban, and the provenance of the colony's local elite.

So far, relatively little is known about how indigenous knowledge circulated from rural into urban areas or from the common people to elites. Recently though, scholars of indigenous Latin America have been active in detailing the myriad connections between social and ethnic groups in the Spanish colonies. Ethnohistorians, in particular, have shown the intertwined nature of subjugated populations and the dominant colonial powers. Echoing Michel de Certeau, Louise Burkhart pointed out that translating Catholic principles into Nahuatl allowed prehispanic concepts to be retained in Central Mexico, while Yanna Yannakakis analyzed the applicability of indigenous power brokers during the conquest and early colonial period of Oaxaca. These studies show that the implementation of colonial institutions has to be viewed as a mediated process; although hierarchies

of authority and power transcended colonial life, Spaniards turned to subaltern populations for a host of activities that countered the colonial racial hierarchy. The ongoing maintenance of colonial society involved the close relations of all colonial groups. Martha Few and Laura Lewis have separately shown how native, African, and Spanish women coalesced around magic rituals and the day-to-day practices of healing in colonial Guatemala and Central Mexico.

Colonial Yucatán represents an underexplored location in the early modern history of science. The region, by most accounts, was peripheral to the viceroyalty of New Spain and the Spanish empire and as Nancy Farriss noted, considered by many as a political and economic “colonial backwater” (30). Because of its relative isolation from the mainland of Mexico, the administration of the colony largely resided in the hands of the Franciscan priests and native leaders. Nevertheless, in spite of these apparent limitations, the region provides a unique site to explore the social relations between distinct colonial groups. Spanish settlers lived among African subjects and large numbers of Mayas native to the region. Starting in the sixteenth century, as observed by Farriss, the region’s Maya population functioned as the foundation of colonial society and survived economic exploitation and religious persecution by developing a collective identity that prioritized negotiating the abuses of the Spanish enterprise (147). Related to the history of knowledge, however, there has been little exploration of the movement of ideas between the different groups of the region. Throughout the colonial period, Maya understandings of the natural and supernatural world became important signifiers of identity, though often at odds with the colonial church. Mayan notions of cosmology endured through the ongoing maintenance of ritual practices tied to the agricultural cycle. Rivas’s eighteenth-century manuscript works reveal that indigenous ideas and approaches were not limited to Mayas alone. Non-natives, even the Spanish authorities of the region, held Mayan beliefs and engaged in Mayan practices that were directly linked to the early modern history of science in the Spanish Atlantic world.

## **Inquiry and Intention**

Celestial bodies nevertheless cannot cause acts of the free will.

Francisco Larreay and Nicolás Troncoso (1776)

The case against Manuel Antonio de Rivas began in the spring of 1773 when a group of Franciscan friars stood before representatives of the Holy Office of the Inquisition in the provincial capital of Mérida and denounced their brother of the cloth, who at the time was a *defindor* (councilor) of the convent of San Joseph de Yucatán, as having committed profound violations of the faith. In the years that followed, numerous clerics came forward to assail Rivas for denying the existence of purgatory, failing to attend mass and give communion, and possessing

prohibited books, accusations that amounted to the heretical crime of *proposiciones* (propositions). As members of the Holy Office would discover, the friar was a harsh critic of the late colonial Spanish state and the prominence of creole ideologies of authority. As a peninsular Spaniard, Rivas held the highest social status in the idealized ordering of colonial society. However, his apparent day-to-day relations with his local Maya subjects attracted the suspicion of his colleagues and superiors. The accusations against Rivas revealed him as a moral defender of both long-standing indigenous traditions and the emergent ideas of the Enlightenment. He actively promoted Mayan ideas of cosmology suppressed by the Crown and consumed Enlightenment works banned by the Church.

On Monday, the twenty-fourth of May 1773, Inquisition officials from the capital of Mérida submitted a parcel of denunciations to the tribunal of the Holy Office in Mexico City regarding the septuagenarian fray Manuel Antonio de Rivas. The accusations came as a coordinated campaign by three Franciscan colleagues, who claimed great injury from the voice and pen of their fellow. According to the friars José de León, Francisco Herrera, and Sebastián Carrillo, Rivas had engaged in the crime of heresy. They warned that the cleric embraced sinful ideas tied to dangerous local traditions and Enlightenment thought. In the months that followed, others joined in arraigning the friar for a spate of activities. Pedro Granado Baeza, a cleric from the village of Motul, where Rivas had once served, claimed that the accused had excoriated as idol worship the use of religious icons. Others from his former monastery in Tekax claimed he had circulated placards in the Maya language that embraced the doctrines of the Protestants Juan Wyclif (John Wycliff) and Juan Hus (Jan Hus). A friar close to him claimed that he owned prohibited books, while others reported rumors of inappropriate relations with members of his parish. The complaints against the friar captured the attention of religious officials, which led to his confinement in 1773. The Holy Office issued formal charges of heresy in 1776; during the trial Rivas's writings proved to be the focus of intense Inquisitional scrutiny.

Rivas had a notorious reputation for incivility, crudeness, and cruelty toward other members of his vocation, as the breadth and variety of accusations from others of his community illustrate. A native of the Spanish province of Galicia, Rivas studied mathematics at the Colegio de Alba de Tormes in Salamanca. In 1742, he came to Yucatán as a newly ordained Franciscan priest and served in convents in Tekax, Motul, and Mérida. Shortly after his arrival in the province, Rivas positioned himself as a critic of creole religious elites in New Spain, even friars within his order. In 1748, for example, Rivas publicly contested the results of the local head of the Franciscan Order.<sup>2</sup> His history of conflicts with religious and Spanish colonial authorities made him a disliked figure among elite society. Nevertheless, it was not until Rivas launched incendiary moral critiques against

2 Documents related to this case can be found in the collections of the Bancroft Library. See: University of California, Berkeley, Bancroft Library, "Casquero Case, Mérida, 1774, Sept. 18," folders 19–22.

fellow friars in 1770 that he became the center of Inquisitional intrigue. The numerous, wide-ranging denunciations against Rivas and his religious views in the 1770s illustrate that he ran afoul of many a colleague. Several individuals testified that the friar employed a scathing wit accompanied by a lack of manners. Witness the statement of one of his denouncers that Rivas's mere presence among proper society regularly caused Spaniards "to flee in horror" at the first sight of him (18r). In the months subsequent to the initial accusations, Yucatecan religious officials attempted to dismiss the conflicts as little more than vulgarities and personal grievances, painting Rivas as a mere insubordinate. Fray Andres Montero, for instance, testified that "The truth is that I do not know, nor have I investigated the accused Padre Rivas, but generally I have heard him speak voraciously in a biting style, motivated by weak and timid clerics of the area; he lacks respect for his superiors and this is the cause of grave discord for the clerics" (17r). Franciscan leaders, however, proved unable to mask the internecine religious conflicts and divisions in local elite society since Rivas's criticisms belied the moral substrate of the entire colonial enterprise.

Cloistered and incarcerated in the convent of San Joseph de Yucatán for three years, Rivas apparently spent much of his time castigating his opponents in letters and memorials, which the friar's enemies submitted as evidence of his heresy. The first works to garner significant attention by Inquisition officials were a pair of nearly identical Maya-language pamphlets that Rivas circulated in the community of Tekax. Described by Inquisition officials as "*pasquines*" (satires) or "*papeles frigidas*" (cold papers), the documents detailed the sexual transgressions of local area priests, lobbing salacious, personal attacks against clerics that impugned their individual character and religious veracity (31r). One pamphlet reads as follows:

I, a truthful informant, speak what you already know about Padre Torres, Padre Díaz, squad corporal, Padre Granado, sergeant, and Padre Maldonado, that they have not made true baptisms, true penitent sacraments, true extreme unction, nor mass. Nor are they under the true spirit of God because they are always horny and fornicate with all the women they desire. When morning comes their smelly hands will be playing with their mistresses. Padre Torres entertains himself by playing with the vagina of the black devil Rita with his deformed hand. Lame though he is, he is still able and he has four children with this black devil. The same is true of Padre Diás, squad corporal, who penetrates the vagina of his god-mother, Antonia Alvarado de Bolonchén before the whole pueblo. Padre Granado, sergeant, squeezes the vagina of Manuela Pacheco every night. And Padre Maldonado gorges himself by fornicating with all his parishioners whom he continually chases. Everyone in the country knows that the pueblo of Pencuyut has another priest known as Xpab Gómez who regularly seduces the commoner and a local woman. Only the Padres have a license to fornicate without so much as a word about

it. If a poor Indian does the same, the Señor will punish him immediately, but these priests will still say mass. God willing, when the English come, may they be not as lustful as the Padres, who never miss penetrating the anuses of the people. God willing, may smallpox afflict the heads of their penises. Amen, your truthful informant. (59r)

By writing in Maya and circulating indictments against local friars, Rivas attempted to undermine the authority of the priesthood in the region using the language of the oppressed. The work begins by framing it as a moral critique of friars who failed to live up to their spiritual obligations. He notes that they were not guided by the Mayan *Yumel Halal Dios*, which literally translates as the Lord Reed God, the Mayan phrase that invokes ancient symbols of the reed, a reference to the nobility. He describes the African Rita as a *kaskas cisin*, an evil devil. Furthermore, the use of Maya allowed the friar to supply lurid details that would rarely have been penned in Spanish. The friars do not simply fornicate, they literally “play with the vagina” (*lolomic u pel*) and “open the anuses” (*topob u yit*). And the reference to smallpox would have resonated deeply among the Maya. The disease ravaged indigenous societies and the Maya were among the first victims in the colonies (Kashanipour 42). By praying for a smallpox affliction, Rivas invoked painful historical memories in order to decry the friars.

The *pasquines* were to be clear, intentionally lurid, prurient, and rather slanderous. Rivas noted that the friars had insatiable appetites; they were anxious for sexual activity “every day” (*sansamal kin*) (59r). Furthermore, he noted that their abuses crossed important social and gender boundaries. The friars fornicated with Africans and preyed upon men and women alike. Not surprisingly, Inquisition officials were gravely concerned about sexual crimes and other mortal sins and launched a series of investigations against the Yucatecan priests in the years following. Even so, the Holy Office had barely any interest in mediating quarrels between mendicants over public courtesies (or the lack thereof), and spent little time dealing with the rancorous nature of Rivas’s pronouncements. Instead, they turned their attention to his scientific works.

Rivas’s almanac and literary voyage to the moon were written in 1774 and 1775, respectively, while he was already under investigation. The almanac detailed the position and movement of the sun, moon, and stellar constellations, which brought into question Rivas’s vision of the location of purgatory, situating him outside of Church doctrine. Rejecting the Copernican interpretations of the geography of the universe, members of the Holy Office raised concerns about the theological implications of charting the heavens. Inquisition officials criticized the almanac’s implicit predictions of the nature and state of time – for example, it furnished the exact hour of sunrise and sunset for certain days in 1775 – and protested that the celestial movements had little bearing on men’s actions. Ultimately, however, the almanac merely raised suspicions of heretical ideas, and it was regarded as an example of the friar’s willingness to engage in local traditions

of knowledge. During his monastic imprisonment in Mérida, Rivas recorded the movement of the sun, moon, and stars.

The maintenance of written accounts of the passing of days and the movement of the heavens was deeply rooted in Maya culture, although the Catholic Church officially deemed them suspect practices often linked to idolatry and witchcraft. As a means of sustaining connections to ancient traditions, Yucatec Maya scribes recorded mythical and cosmological information in community record books. This genre of text, commonly known as the books of the *Chilam Balam*, provided Mayas a space to incorporate indigenous knowledge about history, astronomy, time, and medicine in an acceptable Spanish format (Bricker and Miriam 14). Specifically, these works borrowed the structure of European almanacs, such as Andrés de Li's *Repertorio de los tiempos* of 1495, and inserted Maya perspectives. The recording of astronomical observations allowed native elites to chart the agricultural cycle and retain information about celestial bodies, which they believed represented both fortune and peril. Mayas frequently described the world cosmographically, populated by humanized forces, the most prominent of which were the goddess of the moon and the god of the sun, known respectively as *Ix Chel* and *Itzamna*. In the prehispanic period, *Ix Chel* represented an edifying and healing force, while *Itzamna* symbolized violence and sickness. As Peter Sigal has remarked, under colonial rule the concept of the moon goddess survived as the Virgin, and Marian cults proliferated on the Yucatán, particularly in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Hence, the recording of the movement of the moon and stars held great social and religious importance. Rivas's almanac, albeit brief, mirrored this indigenous tradition. The account was divided into two parts: a history of the ancients and a record of days, which directly corresponded to the structure and format of native and Spanish books. Maya ritual texts, like those broadly known as the books of the *Chilam Balam*, also started by recording the ancient histories and measuring the movement of the heavens. Through such activities, human actions served to balance the two polar forces of the moon and the sun.

Keeping track of the heavens and recording time were thus central to the Maya worldview and Rivas's almanac represented an extension of this tradition. Although fragmentary, in conjunction with the Maya-language texts, the almanac illustrated that Rivas looked to indigenous practices and knowledges, even those considered questionable and dangerous, to orient his own scientific work.

Rivas's literary journey to the moon, known as the *Syzigias y cuadraturas lunares*, served as the main piece of evidence in the formal case against him. Written in a Baroque style typical of late colonial Mexico, the *Syzigias y cuadraturas* interlaced a story within a story within a story. The work, in particular, appears as a series of letters written in the future between inhabitants of the Moon that detail the arrival of first messages from earth and then explorers. The title of the work itself plays on classical and early modern scientific notions of personal and scientific exploration. Among astronomers, a syzigia is represented

as the convergence of three celestial bodies along a single line while a quadratura occurs when one celestial body is ninety degrees from another body when measured in relation to a third. In Rivas's tale, the Moon, Sun, and Earth are brought into direct relation through human experimentation and exploration. His use of syzgies and quadraturas, thus, connoted two allied principles: that morality and immorality were fundamentally intertwined, and that the moon, earth, and sun were linked along a shared plane.

The manuscript begins with a message from the secretary of a Lunar Intellectual Congress in the year 2510. Celebrating the scientific sophistication expressed in an anonymous letter that recently arrived from Mérida, Yucatán, the Lunar secretary praised one Don Ambrosio de Echeverría, *Atisvador de los movimientos lunares* (Observer of Lunar Movements) of Mérida, Yucatán for his knowledge of the syzgies and quadratures of the earth, sun, and moon. "In his letter," the lunar secretary wrote, "the Observer writes with sarcasm, cleverly dropping in erudition, and nothing that is vulgar" (83r). The secretary was one of the many inhabitants of the moon – known as *Anctítonas* – who recorded the history of the earth alongside their own. While societies on both celestial bodies shared common mythologies and a shared origin, that of the moon was built on empirical knowledge and technological progress while that of the earth rejected science and rationality. Before the Lunar Congress concluded, however, the *Anctítonas* were shocked by the arrival of a flying vessel – "a carriage or circular vessel, guided by two wings and rudder" (85r) – piloted by one Onésimo Dotalón. A native of France, Dotalón reported that he had studied the physics of Isaac Newton in Paris, learning to conduct scientific experiments, thus inventing ways to test Newton's ideas. He took to the air in a vessel of his own creation to investigate the laws of physics, much to the chagrin of the Inquisition who attempted to "burn him alive in public as a magician" (85r). Along Pliny's floating islands of the Calamies and the Incan peaks of the Andes, Dotalón gauged the Newtonian principles of gravity and observed the Copernican movement of the earth. After confirming the orbit of the moon, he reported, "I had to laugh when I remembered that Monsieur Descartes, in a fit of extravagant imagination, turned the Moon around the Earth through a vortex of movement" (86r).

While the *Anctítonas* celebrated the arrival of the first earthling, the capital of Yucatán was suddenly besieged by demons descending from the Sun. As enemies of enlightened thought, the demons scour the landscape in search of a "materialist" who celebrates scientific knowledge over tradition (85r). The symbolism was obvious: the enlightened Dotalón represented a moralizing force that looked to knowledge of the physical world for edifying and enriching principles. As he celebrated his accomplishments on the moon, forces of the devil on the sun sought to limit his influence. The demons, much like the colonial administration and Inquisition officials, existed as "enem[ies] of rational society" (88r). The enlightened moon stood in contrast to the degenerate sun, and the earth was a critical battleground.

As the earth lay besieged by the irrational agents of the sun, Dotalón visited the diverse, but orderly, lunar landscape. He employed mathematical principles to navigate around the entire orb. “The true diameter of the Moon,” Dotalón is informed, “keeps a proportion of 33 to 121 as compared to the Earth” (87v). Unlike earth, the lunar cities were measured, predictable, and ruled by geometric principles, exemplified by Dotalón’s news that The Land of the Deaf and the Land of the Asses were connected by a magnificent bridge. The distance between the two regions could be calculated as “the number of arcs that can be subtracted from 188 and the same number of arcs are subtracted from 48 [which can be understood as] 12 with 8 = 2.256 – 12Ω8V 386” (88r). While mysterious to the outside observer, such calculations guided the earthling along his four-month voyage.

After observing and measuring the cities and regions of the moon, Dotalón prepared to return to earth. Before his leave-taking, however, the secretary of the Lunar Congress presented him with a letter written on silver plates that called for future relations between enlightened societies. The invitation bore the date of 7,914,522, the point in time during which inhabitants of the earth and moon separated into two separate populations. As he readied for his departure, Dotalón praised the moon as an enlightened utopia and stated that, “in all of the universe there is not a more comfortable, agreeable or more delightful place to live for those that praise the Creator [...] What marvels and beauties of nature that here seem so ordinary and yet are contemplated without astonishment and awe!” (90r).

During the sixteen-month heresy investigation, Inquisition experts wrote detailed *calificaciones* (legal summaries) censuring Rivas and his writings. One official traduced the work as the hideous ravings of a madman, exclaiming, “What spectacular horrors are not recalled in this mad and tortured memorial!” (19r). On the nineteenth of October 1776, the secretary of the Holy Office in Mexico declared that the work was based on “false suppositions,” especially the challenging of the divine origins of knowledge (115r). Confounded by the unusual nature of the piece of futuristic fiction, another official claimed that it was “not possible to imagine separating the religion from the writings of such a profane priest” (118r).

The use of astronomical knowledge to justify human activities particularly rankled religious leaders. For example, the charting of the position of the sun and the movement of the moon and stars echoed Maya traditions of charting good and bad days based on the position of the heavens. In February 1776, the Inquisition’s prosecution lawyers noted that since the times of Saint Thomas Aquinas, the Church had declared the cosmos without influence over humanity. That same month, the Inquisition officials Francisco Larreay and Nicolás Troncoso declared, in Latin, “*Unde corpora caelestia non possunt esse per se causa operationum liberi arbitrii*” (Celestial bodies nevertheless cannot cause acts of the free will) (108v). According to the commissariat of Yucatán, therefore, knowledge of the movement of celestial bodies was of little importance for the day-to-day activi-

ties of humanity. Rivas's embrace of astronomy and other Enlightenment sciences aligned him with a growing number of individuals who, in celebrating human discovery over divine inspiration, had run afoul of Church doctrine.

Martin de Moya, an Inquisition-appointed lawyer, by justifying his works as the mere folly of an eccentric friar. Recorded in Mexico City on the eleventh of July 1777, the defense defined Rivas's works not as religious or scientific treatises, but as edifying, though strange, creative experiments. In particular, de Moya noted that the *Syzigias y cuadraturas* emulated the traditions of Homer, Orfeus, and Cirilo and represented "*un código de apólogos morales*" (a code of moral fables) (121r). By so positioning the work, de Moya downplayed the scientific themes as mere folly, arguing that Rivas therefore had avoided advancing specific interrogations of Catholic dogmas concerning the architecture of celestial and temporal relations.

The Holy Office found the defense compelling and noted that however misguided, Rivas's works were not intentionally heretical. The Inquisitor General declared them simple fables, although lewd ones. On Monday the fourteenth of July 1777, the Holy Office of the Inquisition in Mexico suspended the case against Manuel Antonio de Rivas, declaring that the case rested upon the friar's irreverence for authority. This ruling was in line with a more general pattern since by the late colonial period the Inquisition was focused on persecuting subjugated populations, such as African women engaged in magic and witchcraft, rather than prosecuting crimes and malfeasance of their own flock (Medina and Alberro 1991). Thus, after four years of inquest and incarceration, all charges against Rivas were dropped.

Though absolved, the Franciscan was nonetheless effectively silenced. His writings remained in the domain of the Holy Office as records of the investigation and not read again for nearly three centuries. Little is known of Rivas's fate after these events, other than that he requested a transfer from his monastery in Mérida to another location. No response to that petition was ever recorded. With that, the historical record goes silent on the friar, and his writings languished under Inquisition censors.

## Science and Morality

[The earth's inhabitants] must suffer from vertigo or permanent dizziness that prevents reflection and a rational soul...

Manuel Antonio de Rivas, *Syzigias y cuadraturas lunares* (1776)

Rivas celebrated science as the pathway of progress. His manuscripts demonstrate the changing intellectual climate of the eighteenth century and position the friar as an intense critic of colonial rule. His Maya-language *pasquines* borrowed directly from European and indigenous traditions to explore moral atti-

tudes and the abuses of colonialism, while his scientific writings brought together both indigenous and Enlightenment ideas to highlight the virtues of empiricism, experimentation, and rationality. These works also show the confluence of suppressed native beliefs and prohibited Enlightenment principles and illustrate the circulation of knowledge within and into peripheral areas of the empire, such as Yucatán.

Rivas's Maya-language pamphlets are unmistakable indications of the friar's connection to indigenous perspectives of morality that prioritized local relationships and self-control. First, by utilizing the indigenous language, Rivas made direct appeals to the native peoples themselves. Although Maya was the *lingua franca* of the region, the church had discouraged all nonnatives from using it. The Yucatecan Synod of 1722, for example, declared Maya a dangerous medium: "We order all Spaniards by the authority of God, especially the fathers and mothers of Spanish families in this Province, to be cautious and separate their children from all associations with the Indians in their household [...] and by no means should they be allowed to speak the barbarous language of the Indians."<sup>3</sup> Second, by publicly decrying the sexual imbroglions of clerics, Rivas echoed native methods of resisting the excesses of colonial authority. Friars were not simply marginal figures in local society, but rather the most important and prominent members of colonial authority in the countryside. During the sixteenth century, they designed the series of ecclesiastical extirpation campaigns that attempted to root out indigenous religious practices across the Spanish colonies. Mayas, as John Chuchiak noted, "learned well the lessons that the priests and friars taught them" (99). Under the restructuring of native societies that came with colonial rule, natives embraced Catholic values of chastity and modesty. Furthermore, since the sixteenth century, Mayas had, through rumor, public pronouncements, and denunciation before the Inquisition, condemned friars who were guilty of sexual improprieties. Rivas's *pasquines*, therefore, were rooted in a practice long employed by Mayas to defy the power of their colonizers. Furthermore, his pronouncements pointed out not only the abuse of natives by friars, but also the fundamental failure of the priests to live by the same principles of sexual conduct that they encouraged their Maya subjects to practice.

In *Syzigias y cuadraturas lunares*, Rivas celebrated the convergence of distinct intellectual traditions, defining the work in opposition to ancient and classical traditions. While ancient Greeks, Muslims, and Jews were able to recognize the importance of the stars, they lacked the moral character to quantify and measure the universe. "The Qur'an," the lunar secretary reports, "lets loose the sensual appetite, like a hedonist devouring meat" (84r). Muslims knew the lunar calendar, but did not possess the individual moral fortitude to apprehend the force of their own scientific knowledge. Interpreting all of his works together, it is apparent that Rivas positioned Mayas as more wholesome and edifying because they rejected

3 Records of the proceedings can be found in the Archivo General de Indias, Audiencia de México, expediente 1040, folios 202–203, "Obispado synodo de Yucatán del año de 1722."

the immoral sexual lives of Spanish society. Moreover, the Maya folk traditions of science, namely charting seasons and tracking the movement of the moon, explained their willingness to engage the principles of objectivity and experimentation celebrated by the Enlightenment.

It is evident from his writings that Rivas was not an isolated priest located in a peripheral region and cut off from the scholarship of scientific progress: he showed great familiarity with classical, Renaissance, and early modern works of science. Though he spent more than four decades in Yucatán, far from the European centers of science, he was integrated into the intellectual world of the early modern Atlantic. It is unclear how the friar accessed the Republic of Letters, but he was certainly informed about works banned by the Inquisition in the colonies. And several members of his own order reported that he owned those illicit texts, though none was ever found. Nevertheless, Rivas's literary voyage to the moon echoed lunar tales of the seventeenth century, including Johannes Kepler's *Somnium* (1634), Francis Godwin's *The Man in the Moone* (1638), and Cyrano de Bergerac's *L'Autre Monde* (1657), and was thus in concert with early modern scientific works. The friar's flying Frenchman, exploring Newtonian physics, visited many of the same locations as Godwin's soaring Spaniard, particularly the highest known mountains of the age. And like Bergerac's protagonist, Dotalón's voyages around the earth and then to the moon were made in order to validate Copernicus's heliocentric model. Structurally, however, Rivas turned these lunar tales on their head. While both Godwin and Bergerac celebrated the discovery of science on earth, Rivas described an enlightened world on the moon.

*Syzigias y cuadraturas lunares* positioned the moon, earth, and sun along a plane of morality. The moon represents a utopian paradise ruled by science while the sun exists as a perilous haven dominated by wickedness. The earth lies in between as the third body of the syzygy. The sun exists at the center of the universe, not as a life-giving and edifying force, but rather as the seductive throne of the Devil himself, and this is why "so many nations on earth worship the sun as God," as the secretary of the Lunar Congress quips (86v). By contrast, the moon is the home of learned men who embrace science as a way to structure their society. The Anctítonas make use of the greatest possibilities of creation and therefore the moon becomes a paradise ruled by science, causing Dotalón to exclaim: "What wonders and beauties of nature that cannot be contemplated without marvel and amazement. What government so sweet and accommodating!" (89v). Reinforcing the moon's orbit around the earth as an endorsement of Copernicus, Rivas expends great care in noting that the earth, moon, and sun exist as intertwined bodies. The moon's diameter was mathematically correlated to the earth itself, with a ratio of 33 to 121 – a ratio that seems to be the product of the friar's own computations. The Anctítonas, unlike people on earth, charted their history deep into the past, documenting the existence of a calendar that dated back some 88,639,860 years. Lunar geography was measured, orderly, and based on scientific planning. Inhabitants were grouped rationally, according to their physical and

social characteristics – the deaf, for example, lived separately from the blind, and the educated resided apart from the masses.

By depicting the moon as a space and society ruled by order, Rivas called for Spanish colonial society to employ Enlightenment principles of empiricism, experimentation, and rationality on earth as well. For him, science represented the means to transform the mysterious natural world into a predictable landscape that could be monitored and controlled. As a critic of the excesses of the Franciscan community, he situated the Yucatán as the symbol of the earth's declining moral state. While the Anctítonas lived amid an organized lunar landscape, earthly societies were chaotic and ruled by obsolete, irrational traditions. Rivas's Anctítonas reported that the earth's inhabitants were grossly ignorant of the rotation of the earth, and this lack of knowledge was the source of their debased character:

[T]he earth revolves from west to east on its axis, relative to the movement of the equinox, this corresponds to its parallel of four Spanish leagues per minute for the peninsula. It is truly a miracle of the Almighty that all of the inhabitants are not thrown into the air with more force than a stone swung round a shepherd's sling. With this considered, they *must suffer from vertigo or permanent dizziness that prevents reflection and a rational soul* and makes them people without brains, immersed in the vices of profanity, luxury, celebrity, fraud, treachery, greed, violent ambition, trampling the sacred with annoying flattery, dependency to calumny, the highest degree of malice, perpetual discord between word and deed, brazen sensuality that only ends in death, hereditary mendacity, fickleness of temperament, and other blunders unworthy of rational nature. (88r, emphasis added)

Rivas claimed that by rejecting science, Spanish society across the colonies remained disorganized and unruly. His protagonist Dotalón noted the perilous opposition of the colonial elites: “[T]he luck of those who rule is the most unhappy,” he stated, “because if they govern poorly, all are unhappy; if they govern well, only a few are happy, because there are very few lovers of justice and equality” (89r).

Inquisition officials took these claims as a great affront to religious doctrine. Where vertigo existed, one official surmised, it was caused by individual malfeasance and not by ignorance of supposed metaphysical laws of nature and the cosmos. For Rivas, however, knowledge of science advanced an intellectual and spiritual development that allowed for close connections between rulers and subjects, thus providing a cornerstone of enlightened government. Consequently, before departing the moon, Rivas's Dotalón uttered one last, and perhaps the most important, endorsement of the moon's utopian society: “What government is so sweet and temperate as that of the Anctítonas!” (89r). For the friar, the Enlightenment opened the heavens to his fictional Frenchman and showed him a world led by just rulers who charted the past and organized the present. As such, empir-

icism and rationality made it possible for the government on the moon to create a world morally superior to that of earth.

## Conclusion

The works of fray Manuel Antonio de Rivas represent a confluence of distinctive traditions of knowledge. While others have noted that science in colonial Latin America emanated from elite networks in urban areas, Rivas's texts illustrate that peripheral areas were also connected to the circulation of knowledge. Ideas crossed geographic, linguistic, and social boundaries, as is most conspicuous in the Maya-language works penned by the peninsular friar. He satirized the entrenched bureaucracies and antiquated ideologies of the Spanish colonies for clinging to divine traditions in the face of empiricism and discovery.

His texts highlighted the intersection of local and colonial traditions in the production of early modern knowledge systems. Standing atop the pillars of indigenous worldviews and Enlightenment knowledge, the friar illustrated that moral claims were interwoven into the discourse of early modern science. To excoriate the abuses of his brothers of the cloth, Rivas resorted to a detailed recounting – in the form and language of the subjugated – of the lewd sexual activities of Franciscan friars. To wit, he elevated on Mayan understandings of morality, particularly the importance of modesty and discretion, in order to challenge the institutions of authority. Furthermore, in rural Yucatán, far outside the metropolises of Europe, the curious friar celebrated with his celestial almanac the formation of a scientific perspective that drew upon native and Enlightenment traditions. Indigenous cosmography served to valorize the Enlightenment approaches to measuring and ordering the natural world.

Finally, *Syzigias y cuadraturas lunares*, Rivas's futuristic literary voyage to the moon, illustrates the importance of moral rhetoric in scientific inquiry. Rivas's inhabitants of the moon embrace science and rational experimentation and, therefore, live in an utopian world while those on earth cling to ancient traditions and exist in debased, abusive societies. Rivas's utopia on the Moon stands for the celebration of science, not simply religion, as a means to discover universal truths and moral virtue. By downplaying the importance of *Syzigias y cuadraturas lunares* and other works of alternative worldviews, Inquisition officials short-circuited any possibility for promulgating, either in indigenous communities in the Yucatán colony or in intellectual circles of the Atlantic World, what it perceived as lies and heretical ideas of a non-Catholic cosmology. Rivas's lunar tale represented a seditious work that castigated the entrenched bureaucracies and antiquated ideologies of the Spanish colonies by celebrating science, experimentation, and empiricism. In the end, Rivas's moon served not merely as a satellite of the earth, but as a moral mirror, constantly reflecting on individual and collective virtues of humanity.

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**The Man Who Faced  
the Saber-Toothed Cat.  
Peter Wilhelm Lund's Forgotten  
Encounters with the Brazilian Deep Past  
and the Colonial Present**

PEDRO DE LUNA

The largest cat that ever lived, the saber-toothed cat (*Smilodon populator*) may have exceeded four hundred kilograms in weight. This is approximately one hundred fifty kilograms heavier than the largest living cat, the Siberian tiger (*Panthera tigris altaica*). Endowed with a pair of huge and dagger-shaped canine teeth, measuring up to thirty centimeters in length, these considerably heftier and impressive felines inhabited the Americas from north to south for over two million years, disappearing 10,000 years ago. What almost no one knows is that this notorious character from the Ice Age was originally a native Brazilian. Its fossils were first found in 1841 by the Danish naturalist Peter Wilhelm Lund (1801–1880), near Lagoa Santa, a tiny village in southeastern Brazil where Lund lived from 1835 until his death in 1880.

Lund is an important – although long overlooked – figure in the natural sciences, both in Europe and especially in Brazil during the first half of the nineteenth century. An example of his relevance is the fact that all of Charles Darwin's books contain at least one reference to Lund's discoveries in the area of the Brazilian empire (Darwin, *Journal of Researches* 138, 183, 382; *Origin of Species* 338). Today, virtually forgotten by European as well as North American scientists and historians of science, Lund is still remembered in Brazil by a small group of admirers, including biologists, paleontologists, archaeologists, and historians, not to mention the people from the state of Minas Gerais<sup>1</sup> who, one hundred thirty years after his death, worship his memory to this day.

In this chapter I will try to close this knowledge gap a little, explaining Lund's importance for the science of paleontology, as well as his contribution to the study of human evolution. Although he was an influential naturalist even before the introduction of Darwin's theory of evolution, Lund produced scientific knowledge from a somewhat peripheral perspective, both geographically and philosoph-

1 In the nineteenth century, this state was a province called Minas Geraes.

ically, and his contributions to science have become prey to historical erasure. I will explore the reasons for this amnesia, as well as suggest how important it is to recover his biography and the research he conducted in Brazil.

Lund's greatest achievement was not his description of the saber-toothed cat, but his discovery of thirty fossilized human skeletons of the Pleistocene period. They became collectively known as the "People of Lagoa Santa." These fossils represent the very first discovery of a significant number of prehistoric human remains, thousands of years older than the Egyptian mummies then being much discussed by Western science. The discovery took place in 1843, thirteen years before the first Neanderthal fossils came to light in Germany in 1856, an event that ultimately opened the eyes of science to the possibility of the one-time existence of now extinct human species.

Although few people have heard of the "People of Lagoa Santa," the face of one of its individuals became familiar to Brazilians in 1999 when a facial reconstruction of the cranium of an 11,500-year-old woman, nicknamed Luzia, made headlines in the Brazilian press. Her skeleton was unearthed in 1975 by French archaeologists who, like so many others, investigated some of the two hundred bone caves in the State of Minas Gerais that Lund had revealed to the world in the 1830s and 1840s.

The current fieldwork in Minas Gerais is being led by the Brazilian paleoanthropologist Walter Alves Neves, head of the Human Evolution Studies Laboratory at the University of São Paulo. Neves is responsible for the reconstruction of "Luzia's" face, and her affectionate nickname is also attributable to him. He drew inspiration from Lucy, the female of the species *Australopithecus afarensis* that lived in Tanzania 3.5 million years ago, and who is fondly considered the "great-grandmother" of mankind. But Peter Wilhelm Lund began the investigation of ancient human remains in Brazil. And their antiquity presented him and his colleagues with a tremendous conundrum.

## A Naturalist Lost in the Tropics

Lund was born in Copenhagen in 1801. He was the eldest son (among three boys) of a wealthy Copenhagen tradesman, Henrik Lund. From childhood, Lund had been fascinated by nature. The extensive walks he would take along the beaches and through the woods near his family's home instilled in him a desire to study the natural sciences.<sup>2</sup>

In 1818 Lund entered the University of Copenhagen in order to become a physician. But it was not to be, for soon Lund realized he was not suited for a doctor's life. What truly intrigued him were the burgeoning scientific fields of phys-

2 Unless otherwise stated, the main sources of information on Lund's life are the following: Birgitte Holten and Michael Sterll; Henriette Lund; Johannes T. Reinhardt; Nerêo C. dos Santos.

iology, botany, and zoology; he longed to be a naturalist and to travel throughout the tropics, following in the steps of his idol, the renowned Prussian naturalist Alexander von Humboldt (1769–1859). Humboldt had toured widely in South America between 1799 and 1804, and his writings inspired an entire generation of European naturalists.

For his final exams in 1825, Lund presented a paper at the University of Copenhagen on the importance of vivisection for the study of human anatomy, as well as one “De genere Euphones,” an essay on the functions of the heart of a Danish sea crab. Each received an award for the best thesis of that year.

After his studies, Lund decided to travel abroad. He made plans to live for a couple of years in Brazil. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Brazil was the favorite destination for European traveler naturalists in America because of the Portuguese royal family’s transfer from Lisbon to Rio de Janeiro in 1808 to escape the invading Napoleonic troops. At that time, while almost every Spanish colony in South America was politically unstable, torn apart by numerous independence struggles and postindependence turmoil, Brazil, providing the political sanctuary for the royal family, was the main exception. It was therefore an obvious choice for Lund. He longed to experience the tropics and see for himself Humboldt’s Hylea, the magnificent “great forest.”

Foreign travel was the dream for most young naturalists of the period. The experience could lead to positions as cabinet naturalists in the new natural history museums that were being created in Europe. Such a venture usually required either participation in an official research expedition (witness Charles Darwin’s voyage on the *Beagle*) or the ability to underwrite one’s own. Thanks to his family’s wealth, Lund could afford to personally finance his aspirations.

Lund’s decision to travel was not only spurred on by the desire to pursue his intellectual interests. Considered of fragile constitution, concerns about his health had been longstanding. After his intense studies at university, Lund felt unusually tired. His older brother had not survived childhood; he had died from tuberculosis. And so Lund was now the oldest of the remaining three brothers. Whether out of grief or because of his now improved financial situation, Lund was finally prompted to begin his peregrinations. Sailing to Brazil, he arrived in Rio de Janeiro by the end of 1825. Instead of taking up residence in the capital, he found a place to live with a French family, on a small plantation in Niterói, in front of Rio just across Guanabara Bay.

A trained botanist, Lund devoted two years to studying the flora of the local rainforest. He was captivated by the richness of the Brazilian natural environment. He spent many months walking around the woods near Niterói, as well as on its shores, studying fish and crustacean species. But he could not live there forever. After a short trip to the mountains outside Rio, he boarded a clipper in 1829 and sailed back to Europe.

In Copenhagen once again, Lund wrote and published several papers on Brazilian passerines, ants, and mollusks. His thesis on a passerine bird species that

lacked a crop in its digestive system was read at the University of Kiel – at that time Kiel was still part of Denmark – in order to earn his Ph.D. in natural philosophy.

In possession of his new degree, Lund spent the next three years traveling throughout Europe, becoming acquainted with naturalists in Germany, Austria, Italy, Switzerland, and France. He first headed south, visiting Berlin, Dresden, Prague, Vienna, Venice, and Bologna, finally reaching Naples and Sicily. He then turned north to Rome, Florence, and Geneva, eventually arriving in Paris, his main destination. There, Lund took lessons at the Musée National d’Histoire Naturelle, where he came to know some of the most preeminent French naturalists, such as Henri Milne-Edwards and Jean-Victor Audouin. He also had the opportunity to meet Humboldt when the Prussian scientist visited Paris. But among all these scholars, the one who had the greatest and most enduring influence on his scientific work was Georges Cuvier, the director of the Musée. Lund met Cuvier in Paris and, according to his letters, was deeply impressed and influenced by the man and his thought.

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, naturalists had tried to explain the existence of fossils in several ways. Although fossil rocks clearly suggested that they were the petrified forms of living things that had existed a long time ago and differed from anything men knew from their own experience, this hypothesis was discarded time and again. Fossils were explained as the signs of the caprice of Nature: beautiful rocks and pebbles, as well as crystallized tears of ancient gods. Fossils simply could not be understood as the remains of long extinct species because they belonged to God’s creation, or so it was believed. Why did God decide to erase his own creation? In a pre-Darwinian God-fearing world, it simply was unthinkable to argue that fossils could belong to extinct animals.

But by the eighteenth century this view had gradually changed. Because of the advancements of the new science of geology, naturalists uncovered the extreme old age of the earth. It slowly dawned on them that the world was not created on Saturday, October 23, 4004 BC, as calculated by the Irish bishop James Ussher on the basis of the Scriptures, but many millions of years ago. In this new scenario, the old dogma of the origin of fossils slowly began to blur and ultimately fade away. It is at this point that Cuvier enters.

Baron Georges Léopold Chrétien Frédéric Dagobert Cuvier (1769–1832) was arguably the most influential naturalist during the first half of the nineteenth century. He was the first to scientifically describe the fossils of extinct animals such as Siberian mammoths, American mastodons (“*Mémoire sur les espèces*” 440–44), and ground sloths (“*Notice sur le squelette*” 303–10). Cuvier analyzed their fossils in close comparison with those of extant species, such as elephants and tree sloths. By doing so, he is remembered as the founding father of both comparative anatomy and paleontology. But each time Cuvier successfully described an extinct species, he was faced with the same problem. Why did they become extinct? Why did God eliminate something He Himself had created? To answer

these questions, Cuvier formulated the theory of catastrophism (*Discours sur les Révolutions*).

Four decades before the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), catastrophism was the prevalent paradigm used to account for the extinction of species. According to catastrophism, the earth had been jolted in the past by several sudden, natural catastrophes such as great floods. Plants and animals living in those parts of the world where such events took place were often killed off and their habitats were quickly repopulated by species from adjacent areas. There was no modern concept of evolution in Cuvier's notion of nature. In his view, every living species was created by God and had remained unchanged since Genesis. Some of them, however, disappeared, and through catastrophism, Cuvier tried to explain how.

After spending many months in Paris, Lund traveled back to Denmark. After his return to Europe, he had been planning to spend the rest of his life working in Copenhagen during the spring and summer, and, as the leaves started to fall, escape from the coming winter by heading to the sunny south of France, where the climate should be better for his poor health – or so was his idea. But he could not forget Brazil. And so in 1832 he decided to revisit that tropical paradise. His goal for this second trip was to gather large collections of plant and other specimens and bring them back home. Acquiring such collections would help Lund secure a curatorial position at the Copenhagen Natural History Museum.

In January 1833, Lund was once again in Rio de Janeiro, this time for a period of study that initially was to be for no more than five years, but which in fact would last the rest of his life. Eventually, the sole purpose of his work there was to locate evidence that would provide proof for Cuvier's theory. Soon after landing in Brazil, he met Ludwig Riedel (1790–1861), a Prussian botanist who had come there in 1821 with a Russian expedition led by the German naturalist Baron von Langsdorff. Riedel supported himself by collecting plants for the Saint Petersburg Botanical Garden. In 1836, Riedel became director of the Royal Botanical Garden in Rio, a post he occupied until his death.

Riedel was the ideal companion Lund was looking for to accompany him on the expedition he had in mind throughout the interior of Brazil. Together, they undertook a two-year journey by mule through the province of São Paulo, collecting both plants and animals. When they reached the province of Goiás in Central Brazil, they decided to return to Rio by crossing the province of Minas Geraes.

By October 1834, the two men had reached a small town known as Curvelo. It was there that Lund first encountered the limestone caves of the Rio das Velhas valley, many of which were filled with the bones of extinct animals. That sight permanently changed Lund's life. He immediately recognized the scientific implications of the fossils: by collecting and studying them, he could provide proof for Cuvier's catastrophism theory. The venture would end up extending his stay in the wilds of Brazil for at least another decade.

Due to its central location in the cave territory, Lund purchased a house at Lagoa Santa. He also bought two slaves (slavery in Brazil lasted until 1888) to dig in the caves, carry the bones, etc. Between 1835 and 1844, Lund explored approximately eight hundred caves and rock shelters, ultimately excavating two hundred of them. The result was a huge collection of 12,000 fossils and fragments, totalling one hundred forty-nine species.

Lund conducted fieldwork in the caves and rock shelters around Lagoa Santa until 1845. According to his correspondence deposited in the manuscript archive of the Copenhagen Royal Library,<sup>3</sup> the early years of research were devoted to finding as many fossils as possible, and describing new species. Although he succeeded in discovering and documenting thirty-two previously unknown but already extinct species, he lost priority in the science community's ongoing race of who was deemed "first." Lund lost almost every time – the great exception being the case of the saber-toothed cat (Lund, "Blyk paa Brasiliens Dyreverden"). Lund was also the first to find fossils of ground sloths, as well as of giant armadillos and extinct American camels. He wrote scientific descriptions for all of them and shipped the papers to Denmark for publication. The mail took four months on mules just to get to Rio, plus two months on ship to reach Copenhagen. Six months after Lund had shipped his manuscripts, they finally arrived on the desk of his advisor in Copenhagen, Johannes C. H. Reinhardt, who organized the review of manuscripts prior to publication. After that, Reinhardt would send the manuscripts back to Lund for revision. That would take another year for the round trip to and from Brazil. This transportation problem greatly extended the time lapse from the discovery of the bones to the dissemination of the communicated knowledge in the scientific community. Lund was to find that geographical remoteness is not the best ally in the competition for publishing new ideas!

Meanwhile, in London, Sir Richard Owen, Britain's main paleontologist, was working on the fossil mammals Darwin had brought back in 1836 from his trip to South America. Himself an armchair scientist unhampered by the infrastructural impediments of the colonies, Owen did not have to look for caves with bones, or dig them up. He just had to prepare the fossils for description and then describe them. Once Owen's manuscripts were at hand, they could be printed quickly. Therefore, Owen published his descriptions before Lund, deserving priority for naming the extinct species, although his work was actually preceded by Lund's. Lund's transportation problem worked to Owen's advantage.

Here are some examples. Lund called his giant armadillo *Hoplophorus* ("Blyk paa Brasiliens Dyreverden ... 1838" 25–27; "Nouvelles observations" 205–8), but his description was published in France in 1839, a month after Owen had named the same animal *Glyptodon clavipes*.<sup>4</sup> Similarly, Lund's ground sloths,

3 Lund's collection consists of about one thousand letters that total some seven thousand pages.

4 See Richard Owen, "Description of a tooth," *Transactions of the Geological Society* (1839), and "Description of a tooth," *Proceedings of the Geological Society* (1839).

*Ocnotherium giganteum* and *Platyonyx owenii* (“Blyk paa Brasiliens Dyreverden ... 1838”), were described by Owen as *Glossotherium giganteum* and *Scelidotherium leptcephalum* (“Description of a Considerable Part of the Skeleton” 73–80). Lund’s description of the extinct American camel, which he named *Lep-totherium* (“For Aaret 1838” 53; “Nouvelles Recherches” 311), shared the same fate, coming to be known as *Macrauchenia patachonica* due to Owen’s act of naming (Owen, “Description of Parts” 35). In all cases the British armchair scientist got the better of the Danish expatriate, due to his quicker access to publishers and printing presses – two of the main conditions for preserving scientific knowledge.

The trajectory of Lund’s scientific thought during his solitary fieldwork seasons, and the following painstaking months of work of bone preparation, were remarkable. By 1835, when he was beginning his research in Brazil, Lund was already a fervent disciple of Cuvier’s ideas. Every newly discovered cave and its bones could hold the secret to past revolutions, that is, catastrophes that had taken place on the surface of the earth. Every new extinct species found was potentially another proof of Cuvier’s theory of devastation. According to catastrophism, the extinct fauna of a certain region was replaced by surviving fauna from proximate territories. It was postulated that earlier revolutions on the earth’s surface were so calamitous, causing such massive levels of extinction, that no single species survived. Therefore, it followed that any living species would be totally unrelated to the old stock. In accordance with this theory, between 1835 and 1837, whenever Lund dug up bones of extinct animals similar to those of living species, he reported on them as unrelated. For instance, in his manuscript accounts of the extinct owl, fox, and deer, although their morphologies are identical to those of the living owl, fox, and deer, which would suggest to view them according to a logic of continuity, Lund instead classified them as separate species.

But there is nothing like the insistence of empirical evidence to effect a change of perspective. After finding hundreds, even thousands of bone fragments of “old and living species,” Lund’s certainties began to grow fuzzy. Maybe, just maybe, both species, old and new, weren’t unrelated after all. Maybe they were the same species, but one that had changed over time. If that was the case, then some species could have survived past deluges and the anatomical differences between extinct specimens and the skeletons of living species had to be explained along a temporal continuum. How to be sure? By the early 1840s, Lund’s confidence in Cuvier’s theory was shaken. But it would require a revolutionary discovery for that confidence to vanish completely: Lund found fossilized human skeletons.

The discovery of the so-called “People of Lagoa Santa” took place in 1843. That winter, an unusually severe drought had drained the water of Sumidouro, a large round lake a few kilometers from Lagoa Santa, revealing a previously submerged and unknown cave that connected the lake to the groundwater system. When Lund heard the news about the dried lake and the now visible cave,

he took the opportunity to investigate them. From August 29 to September 10, 1843, he explored the cave's interior. The muddy sediments not only hid fossils of extinct animals but fragmented human skeletons representing at least thirty individuals (among the specimens were twenty skulls) of varying ages, from newborns to the elderly.

Reflecting on the find, Lund wrote: "It is among that mix of extinct and also extant species that there appeared the remains of an enigmatic [i.e., prehistoric] horse and of man, all in the same state of decomposition which leaves no doubt about the coexistence of these beings whose remains were buried together" ("Notice sur des ossements humains" 68; transl. PL).<sup>5</sup> In other words, Lund was convinced that he had found evidence of the coexistence of men with extinct fauna – fifteen years before the famous discovery of manmade tools intermingled with the bones of extinct rhinoceros, cave bear, and hyena in Brixton Cave, Devonshire, England, in 1858 (van Riper 90).

The discovery was extraordinary. But instead of drawing scientific attention to himself by publishing results that would redefine the story of men on earth, Lund virtually swept them under the rug. He merely produced a short essay in French that appeared in 1845, both in Denmark and in France ("Remarques sur les ossements humains"; "Notice sur des ossements"), but then he discontinued the study of the skeletons. What he did next was even more astonishing: at the age of forty-four and at the height of his energies, he threw it all away. Forsaking everything, he abruptly abandoned his fieldwork in the caves and donated his collections to King Christian VIII of Denmark. He boxed and dispatched dozens of cases to Copenhagen, sold his two slaves, and never again set foot outside the small town of Lagoa Santa, where he remained, living a quiet life for the next thirty-five years, until his death in 1880, aged seventy-nine. His discovery, which should have gained him everlasting fame and a secure seat in the pantheon of modern science, remained largely unknown.

## The Mystery of Lund's Sudden Retreat

The reasons behind Lund's decision to cease his fieldwork are not known for sure. The only concrete clue we have is in a short paragraph in a letter sent on January 10, 1845 to Johannes C. H. Reinhardt (1776–1845), his former advisor and mentor. It reads as follows:

The work in the caves is at its end, not because it does not give me pleasure or because there is not still plenty of unstudied material. I know some huge caverns with bones that deserve to be excavated, but I lack

5 "Ce fut dans ce mélange d'espèces éteintes et encore existantes que parurent les débris énigmatiques du cheval et de l'homme, tous dans le même état de décomposition qui ne laissa nul doute de la coexistence de ces êtres dont les restes ont été enfouis ensemble."

the good health to do it, as well as an instructed apprentice to help me. However, the main reason is the considerable expenses, which I do not anymore see myself able to pay by my own means. ("Letter to Johannes Christopher Hagemann Reinhardt, 10 January 1845")<sup>6</sup>

Reinhardt never read this letter, having died just before it reached him. And Lund never revealed the subject of the letter either to his family or his friends and colleagues in Europe, which in all likelihood renders the declaration of a lack of funds as the reason for stopping the fieldwork a weak excuse. After all, Lund was a wealthy man. If it was true that he no longer had the resources to continue his work, how then did he manage to spend the rest of his life in Brazil without a job, passing his days engaging in long walks, horseback riding, and caring for his beloved garden?

There has been much speculation about why Lund broke off his research. "The reasons offered by Lund for the end of the work in the caves are simple and clear," wrote his great-grand-niece, Ebba Lund: "This [exhausted financial resources] could be a good explanation, but another reason could be the fact that it was very hard for Lund to keep himself scientifically up-to-date while living so far away from the scientific world" (Ebba Lund 9). In a biographical essay written in 1882, J.T. Reinhardt (Johannes C.H. Reinhardt's son, who had spent time working with Lund in Brazil), pointed out that by living in Central Brazil, Lund was extremely isolated from the larger scientific community. Furthermore, the hard work in the caves, often in unsanitary conditions, could well have worsened Lund's frail health. "It was difficult," he writes,

often impossible to collect samples in sufficient numbers to form a complete specimen; in addition to the inevitable difficulties of the study and assembling of specimens it should also be noted that his location was very secluded in the interior of Brazil, a location that kept him away from all society and the influence of men of science [...] [This] forced him to acquire absolutely needed literary resources very slowly and with much loss of time, because of the imperfect and rare communication means of these days. (Reinhardt 55–56)

According to the French engineer Henri Gorceix, director of the School of Mines of Ouro Preto, and a contemporary of Lund's who knew him personally, an emotional crisis, brought on by Lund's seclusion in Brazil, might explain his actions:

6 "Med Hularbeideren er det vel tilende, ej fordi det mangler mig paa Lyst, ej heller paa Stof, da jeg veed nogle meget vige Knoklehuler, der fortjente at udgraves, men deels af Mangel paa Helbred, skjøndt herpaa lod sig raade Bod, da jeg, nu har dannet endeel praktiske Lærlinge, der kunde lette mig Arbeidet noget; men hovedgrunden er de betydelige Udgifter, der ere forbundne dermed, som jeg ej længere seer mig i stand til at bestride af mine egne Midler." The English translations of this and all the quotations that follow are mine (PL).

Having parted with his collections in 1847, when they were sent to Denmark during the visit of (J.T.) Reinhardt (to Lagoa Santa), Lund gave the impression that, at least for a while, he would refrain from studying the fossil remains; he himself acknowledged, though, that their task was far from having touched its natural end; his first four monographs were just the prologue to the great work whose plan he conceived, of which the monograph on the family [of] dogs was the first chapter. But it is easy to understand Lund's need to momentarily suspend his scientific activity. After eight years of endless labor in complete solitude [...], despite all his dedication to work, Lund could not stop feeling tired. [...] I think it is in his isolation, rather than the condition of his health, that we should look for the reason for his silence that lasted until the end of his life. (Gorceix 39)

A little over a century after Lund's death, the Danish historian Birgitte Holten added another point of view. She had access to Lund's correspondence, archived in the Royal Library of Copenhagen. According to Holten, many hypotheses have been discussed, "and Lund himself threw fuel on the fire with his various excuses, polished and divergent." She writes:

His health concerns seem totally exaggerated, [...] but on the other hand some of his precautions – like not visiting Rio de Janeiro while the city was suffering from yellow fever outbreaks – were the only sensible thing to do [...] No doubt Lund was an eccentric, as there are no more. ("To recall to Life")

## The Legacy of a Naturalist

The small Arraial da Nossa Senhora de Saúde de Lagôa Santa, the name of Lagoa Santa during Lund's life there, no longer exists. The old main street, with its sixty simple wattle-and-daub houses grouped on the bank of one of the most beautiful lakes in the region, has become part of a fancy residential neighborhood on the outskirts of Belo Horizonte, Minas Gerais's state capital. But even though the small old town has disappeared, Lund's name can be found everywhere.

In the downtown area, for example, there is a small square with a statue of Lund, including a quote from him: "Here, indeed, it is good to live." Across the street is Dr. Lund Primary School. It was built in the 1930s on the site where Lund's home once stood. His grave lies a few blocks away in a small cemetery. Since Lund was a Lutheran, he could not be buried in the local Catholic cemetery, so he bought a small piece of land on a hill overlooking the lake for his final resting place. He shares the spot with his assistants, his German secretary, Wilhelm Behrens, and the Norwegian painter, Peter Andreas Brandt.

Just as his home has vanished, so has his garden, books, and everything else he had accumulated in the forty-five years he lived in Lagoa Santa. The only

things that still exist are his letters, a few of which are lodged in the library of the Brazilian Institute of History and Geography in Rio de Janeiro.

The bulk of Lund's correspondence, a huge archive of over a thousand letters, is preserved in Denmark. Part of it was assembled shortly after the death by his adopted son, the Brazilian Nerêo Cecílio dos Santos, who sent the letters to J.T. Reinhardt in Copenhagen. Reinhardt, in his turn, gathered the letters sent by Lund to Lund's family, as well as those addressed to him and to his father (Lund's advisor). After having everything cataloged – over seven thousand manuscript pages – Reinhardt deposited the whole collection in the Royal Library in Copenhagen, where it was forgotten for over a hundred years.

It was not until the mid 1980s when librarians began microfilming the items in the section of ancient manuscripts that the Lund archive was rediscovered. Besides hundreds of letters in Danish, there are several written in Portuguese, French, German, and English. Lund also knew Latin, Greek, and a little Italian. Most of the letters were written in his native Danish, and in Gothic script. This medieval alphabet was in use in Denmark until 1885, when the government adopted the Latin one.

Since the 1990s, virtually all of Lund's correspondence has been deciphered, read, and studied by a few Danish historians, especially Birgitte Holten, of the Centre for Business History at the Copenhagen Business School. Thus it became known that well before the finding of the bones of the people of Lagoa Santa, the dividing line between extant and extinct species had already begun to recede for Lund. He had already begun to accept the fact that some species had survived the so-called catastrophes proposed by Cuvier. After all, an owl is still an owl, a guinea pig is still a guinea pig, and a red brocket deer is still a red brocket deer, whether they are alive or petrified. We can only speculate about what Lund thought about *when* the extinct species had become extinct; the new scientific sense of geological time was only just emerging.

Holten's research, however, was not able to shed new light on the reasons behind Lund's decision to stop his fieldwork. But we may assume that a conglomeration of several hidden, underlying reasons did exist. In order to learn more, we will have to follow the fugitive traces of scattered documents, and through dint of creative guesswork fill the lacunae left by the historical record. With various traces pieced together, what emerges is a possible story that contains a few fundamental clues to answering the pressing question of why Lund discontinued his work in 1845.

## **A New Character Enters the Stage**

The first hint can be found in the same letter Lund sent on January 10, 1845 to his advisor Johannes C.H. Reinhardt. Here Lund confessed he might shut down his excavations because of lack of money. In another letter written that same day,

addressed to King Christian VIII of Denmark, Lund informed the king of his intention to donate his entire naturalist collection to the People of Denmark, without making the slightest mention of a supposed lack of resources.

Although there is a chronological list of Lund's letters, the collection is not organized accordingly. There are several folios, each containing a particular set of documents. Thus, there is a folio with family correspondence and another containing letters between Lund and Reinhardt the father (Lund's mentor), and Lund and Reinhardt the son (Lund's disciple); a third folio holds his correspondence with various other people, including friends, naturalist colleagues in Europe, and booksellers in Rio de Janeiro, as well as a copybook full of scribbles and abbreviations, and corrected and deleted phrases.

It was in this copybook that Lund would write the first draft of his letters. Only after making revisions did he copy the final text, using an impeccable and very stylized handwriting. Right in the middle of hundreds of the smudged pages of his copybook there are three dozen letters in Portuguese, sent between 1840 and 1846. They tell the story of a lawsuit Lund filed against a certain Hungarian engineer named Franz Wiszner von Morgenstern (1804–1878). The reason for the lawsuit was the bankruptcy of a gold mine in which Morgenstern and Lund were partners, and Lund was Morgenstern's guarantor. By 1839, the work of Lund in the caves was in full swing. Already imagining his future return to Europe, he informed his family he had a plan to settle in the south of France, far away from the Scandinavian winter. Perhaps in order to increase their wealth or simply to replace what he had spent during the excavations, Lund decided to invest in a gold mine in the stream of Papafarinha, near the town of Sabará, Province of Minas Geraes. At that time, the risks of gold mining in Brazil were faced by European immigrants and fortune hunters. Morgenstern was one of them.

We do not know for sure when Morgenstern arrived in Brazil. What we do know is that he was living in Minas Geraes between 1839 and 1841, and disappeared suddenly without a word. He resurfaced in 1845 in the government of president Carlos Antonio López (the father of Paraguay's future dictator Francisco Solano López), having been hired as an engineer to design López's presidential palace in the capital, Asunción. In 1865, the first year of the Paraguayan War, Morgenstern would receive the rank of colonel, accounting for the fortifications on the Paraguay River. This unusual character and jack of all trades was to play a decisive role in Lund's life.

In February 1840, Morgenstern and a Brazilian named Martiniano Pereira de Castro signed a contract worth twelve *contos de réis* (the Brazilian currency at the time) to open up the Papafarinha gold mine (Vieira). The agreement was that Castro would have six months to raise his share of the capital, while Morgenstern would take out a loan to provide his portion. Morgenstern borrowed six contos de réis from Lund and Lund never saw his money again.

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Morgenslern

Monsieur le Docteur Pierre Guillaume Lund      Lagoa Santa.

Papafantina 25 de Fevereiro 1840

Monsieur.

C'est avec bien de la peine, que j'ai reçu votre lettre par l'entremise de Sebastião Brandão, par lequel vous me signifiez de regarder ce M<sup>rs</sup> comme votre procureur dans les affaires d'argent qui nous avous eu semble, dans le même temps vous me signifiez de payer la somme de Int<sup>rs</sup> 4000 conformément notre traité en trois mois.

Je suis sûr & je vois que ce procédé a pour seul des mensonges que ce même homme & Serge ont ourdis contre moi, en allant chez vous, j'étais instruit de ce voyage, & je m'en suis bien douté, qu'en ce cas il faut chercher quelques nouvelles manœuvres contre moi, en voulant vous faire peur pour la sûreté de votre capital, perité sur hypothèque de Papafantina; comment on vous a déguisé la vérité je puis vous la donner?

Le créancier qui m'a cité est Brazado, & il a fait cela uniquement pour s'acquiescer sa dette, parcequ'un premier créancier est le docteur Biset, & moi seulement son Adeogado, & comme on se dit en portugais, — je l'ai saisi, j'en, parcequ'un avoué & un conventionnel ne peut résister pour moi, lui ne pouvant faire aucune exécution sur hypothèque judiciaire, la nôtre étant la première, est contre les lois des pays de faire vendre une propriété de la somme n'excède pas la moitié de l'évaluation judiciaire, la somme q<sup>e</sup> Brazado prétend est de 2. cents de reis, & la propriété vaut en 30 cents, en outre il n'a nullement de monter qui il a fait avant-recours, à son principal créancier, & que celui-ci n'a pas avec quoi payer, la dette est devenue entièrement tranquille, parcequ'il n'y avait quelque chose à valider pour moi, moi même je vous aurais le premier avis, & si vous réfléchissez avec sang froid, vous devriez

Fig. 1: Excerpt of a letter sent by Morgenstern on February 25, 1840, in which he tries to explain to Lund why he had not fulfilled his contractual obligations related to the acquisition of the gold mine.

By early 1841, the mine had not produced a single nugget and, after a torrential flood, which destroyed most of the prospecting equipment, it went bankrupt (Morgenstern). The letters in the copybook (see Fig. 1) reveal that Lund patiently tried to collect the debt, while Morgenstern used a number of subterfuges to delay payment. In response, Lund hired Quintiliano José da Silva, a well-known law-

yer from the city of Sabará, to try to bring Morgenstern to justice. In the meantime, Morgenstern ran away. Was the fugitive debtor the cause of Lund's decision to stop producing knowledge about Brazil's deep past?

Although the years that followed were the most productive period of Lund's career as a naturalist, financially they were disastrous. By the end of 1844, Lund had lost his lawsuit. He was ordered to pay all the debts, plus expenses, for both Morgenstern and Castro. The copybook contains Lund's calculations of the debt amount plus the interest Morgenstern owed him: seven contos and 886,000 réis, or about 318,000 US dollars when adjusted for inflation (Lund, "Letter to Manoel Rodrigues Lima"). Add to that sum the twelve contos of Lund's share he already lost when the Papafarinha gold mine went bankrupt and we arrive at a total loss in excess of 800,000 US dollars. This was a great deal of money, even for a wealthy person such as Lund.

Lund appealed the verdict, only to be surprised by his lawyer, Quintiliano, withdrawing from the case. Quintiliano had just been elected president of the Province of Minas Geraes and was moving to the provincial capital, Ouro Preto. With this change, the appeal stalled. On January 9, 1845, Lund sent a letter to Quintiliano stating his willingness to move to Sabará in an effort to try to accelerate the process by his physical presence ("Letter to Quintiliano José da Silva"). The next day, January 10, he wrote two letters, one to his old advisor, Reinhardt, in which he raised the possibility of ending his fieldwork because of a lack of funds ("Letter to Johannes Christopher Hagemann Reinhardt"), and the other to the King of Denmark, Christian VIII, donating his collections of fossils and bones ("Letter to King Christian VIII").

## **And so One Hundred Sixty-Three Years Passed**

Lund had run out of money, he had to sell his two slaves and shut down his research. Nevertheless, his brothers continued sending him money from the family treasury, thus enabling him to live comfortably in Brazil for the rest of his life. Why did Lund never return to Europe? Maybe it was his fear of Scandinavian winters, something he mentioned several times in his letters. Perhaps he was afraid his family would discover that he had lost a fortune in Brazil. Or worse, perhaps he was horrified by the idea that the King would learn that he had deliberately omitted some embarrassing details (i.e., his bankruptcy) in the letter he had written offering to donate his collections to the People of Denmark. The fact is Lund never mentioned the whole extent of his financial difficulties to anyone, according to the surviving documentation.

In the almost one hundred seventy years since Lund ended his fieldwork in the bone caves and the one hundred thirty-five years since his death, we have come to know that lack of money was indeed the reason that forced a brilliant scientist to terminate his career at its peak because of an unsecured loan made to the

wrong person. At the same time, in his attempts to recoup his losses through legal recourse, he displayed an astonishing naïveté, believing in the certainty of justice.

Lund's manuscripts lay forgotten in the Royal Library of Copenhagen for more than a hundred years, only to be rediscovered by Danish historians who did not have the background to elucidate the mystery of the life of Peter Wilhelm Lund. It was not enough to be fluent in Danish or to be able to read Gothic handwriting. And how could they have suspected that the mystery's key was hidden in a few scribbled pages of Portuguese?

Yet, another mystery remains: even without further digs in the bone caves, Lund could have continued his intellectual work of reflecting on the scientific consequences of his discovery. If he did, no proof of this remains. With 'health' being his official excuse and 'money' the more convincing material reason for discontinuing his work, the intellectual and spiritual transformation that must have been brought about by his discovery remains an object of historical guesswork. The scholar who found that man might have been the contemporary of the saber tooth cat never shared his interpretation of this fact with posterity.

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**EMBATTLED HISTORIOGRAPHIES  
BETWEEN LATIN AMERICA AND  
THE UNITED STATES**



**Connected Histories of the United States, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica: The Memories of the War against the Filibusters of 1855 to 1857**

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In the last two hundred years, the historical processes of state building and national invention in any individual country have been entangled with similar processes in other countries. Each state has been constructed through courses of conflict and rivalry with other national or imperial states, and each nation has been imagined and invented by way of confrontational actions with other national communities. As a result, it should be recognized that these operations have taken place in a worldwide context and as interactions on a global scale (Bender 141–50). Since their inception, and at different stages of their development, states and nations have shared many types of historical experiences; for example, and most obviously, military conflicts. With the ascent of nations and nationalism, narratives of wars and the past have been framed within national perspectives (Berger, Donovan and Passmore 3–13). For instance, schoolchildren learn the official narrative of the wars in which their state has participated, but they are always also taught to ignore how these same historical episodes are reported by the countries that fought on the opposing side. In other words, by means of a nationalistic bias, an experience shared by two or more countries is presented in historical narratives as a national event only, disentangled from its connections within a larger scheme.

This brand of methodological nationalism can also be found in the historical narratives of a very important event in the history of Central American countries and the United States, one that led to the convergence of their historical paths in the middle of the nineteenth century: the expedition of the US filibusters, under William Walker, to Nicaragua, the occupation of that isthmian country, and the war that occurred between the Central American states and the invaders from 1855 to 1857. Every Central American country, and particularly Nicaragua and Costa Rica, has a specific and nationalistic version of this war, and the narratives circulating in the United States concerning this military conflict differ yet again from those disseminated in Central America. Indeed, there is a sharp contrast between the way Central America and the United States deal with this shared



Fig. 1: Based on the Spanish-language map published in: Acuña Ortega, Víctor Hugo. *Centroamérica: Filibusteros, Estados, Imperios y Memorias* 23.

moment in their past. In Nicaragua and Costa Rica the war occupies an especially salient place in their respective national memories. Contrast this with the United States, where Walker's adventure, perceived by his contemporaries as an exceptional affair, has been totally forgotten (Acuña, *Campaña Nacional* 46–49).

I would also like to recall something that is rarely acknowledged or recognized: the notion of a Latin America as opposed to an Anglo-Saxon America emerged around 1856 in response to Walker's Nicaraguan expedition (McGuinness 159–63). Hence, the story of the filibusters not only played a role in the invention of Costa Rica and Nicaragua as nation states, it was also instrumental in the redefinition of the identity of Hispano-American societies.

In this essay, I will analyze the evolution of the way the story of Walker's expedition to Nicaragua has been related by the historiographies of the United States, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica, from the moment of the event itself to the present. I will start by briefly describing the episode, then I will point out the analytical implications of the story in terms of connected histories or *histoire croisée*, both for the episode itself and for its narratives. Following these methodological considerations, I will address some theoretical questions about the relationships between history and memory, and particularly the links between national memories and national historiographies, i.e., the works of history written by both professional and nonprofessional historians. I will then examine the evolution of the competing versions of Walker's expedition in the historical works published

from 1855 to the present. In conclusion, I will focus on the intersections of Costa Rican and Nicaraguan national memories, and on how these memories relate to the oblivion that prevails in the public sphere in the United States when it comes to this particular piece of history.

## The Events and Their Actors

After obtaining its independence in 1821, Nicaragua entered a long period of political unrest, during which the main actors were the elites of the cities of León and Granada (Burns 42–48). In May 1854, a new military conflict started up between the Liberals from León and the Conservatives from Granada. During its first year, this civil war reproduced the old parameters of civil wars in Central America, i.e., strife between poorly trained and armed militias of peasants and artisans led by different improvised military chiefs. The situation changed in June 1855, when a small force of US filibusters, hired by the Liberals, disembarked in El Realejo port, on the Pacific coast of Nicaragua. As a result, a typical, internal Central American war suddenly became an international armed conflict that resonated far beyond the borders circumscribing the region. Indeed, this Nicaraguan civil war evolved into something unprecedented because in addition to the local and Central American actors already involved, a larger set of foreign players also joined the fray. England and the United States sent naval forces, anchoring ships on both the Pacific and Caribbean Nicaraguan coasts. Included among the filibuster troops were veterans from the US war against Mexico (1846–1848), some from European contests, particularly the Carlist wars and the Hungarian Revolution of 1848, and others who had been part of previous filibustering expeditions against Mexico and Cuba. In short, a Nicaraguan civil war became an international event that carried with it global impact.

In its entirety, the whole affair, comprising two phases – the civil war and the antifilibuster war – lasted three years, from May 1854 to April 1857 (Acuña, “De la Guerra Civil” 75–78). The civil war started with a party of Nicaraguan Liberal expatriates, coming from Honduras and led by Francisco Castellón and Máximo Jerez, landing on Nicaragua’s Pacific coast. Shortly after their arrival in May, the invaders defeated the Conservative armed forces, which were commanded by the President, Fruto Chamorro, in a battle at the hacienda El Pozo, located several kilometers away from the city of León. After this rout, the Conservative government abandoned León – the city they had previously captured – and moved to Granada. Meanwhile, the Liberals took over León, established a provisional government, and sent forces to assail the Conservatives in their new location. The siege of Granada lasted until February 1855, when the Liberals, exhausted by a long and ineffective campaign, withdrew to their stronghold in León. The Con-

servatives, however, failed to profit from this victory since their *caudillo*, Fruto Chamorro, died in March 1855.

Hence, it was in the context of the Conservatives' counteroffensive that William Walker and his fifty-eight 'immortals', coming from San Francisco, California, landed in Nicaragua on June 16, 1855. In his first military action Walker, accompanied by a Liberal force, was vanquished by the Conservatives on June 29 at the city of Rivas. His main interest, though, was not to protect the Liberals and their city, but to capture the interoceanic transit route. Consequently, the filibuster returned to the Rivas area at the end of August and on September 2, crushed a Honduran Conservative force at La Virgen. This victory marked a surprising shift in the war: several weeks later, on October 12, Walker captured the city of Granada, site of the Conservative government. For all intents and purposes, with this resounding success the filibuster assumed power in Nicaragua. The Conservatives were forced to sign a peace treaty with the Liberals, and a new provisional government was established under Walker's control.

The outcome of the Nicaraguan civil war startled the other Central American governments, worried the British authorities, revealed both disapproving and tolerant attitudes of the US government, and sparked a surge of enthusiasm in many sectors of the US public. In response to these high spirits, the ranks of Walker's troops increased by several thousand volunteers from the United States. Originally, many of these men came to Nicaragua with the expectation of establishing themselves as pacific colonizers or pioneers (Gobat, "Vida Cotidiana" 109–10). To ensure the uninterrupted influx of volunteers, Walker had struck a deal with US tycoon Cornelius Vanderbilt, who agreed to transport men and provisions at no cost on his Accessory Transit Company (ATC) ships. Established in order to provide faster connections between the recently opened territory of California and its Gold Rush and the east coast and southern United States, Nicaragua granted the ATC the right to navigate a route through the Nicaraguan isthmus. But in February 1856, Walker expropriated the Nicaraguan ATC's assets, turning the powerful shipowner into one of his fiercest enemies (Stiles 280–82).

In March 1856, the war's second phase commenced when a Costa Rican army left for Nicaragua with the intention of expelling the filibusters. On March 20, before entering Nicaraguan territory, a vanguard of the Costa Rican army unexpectedly met a party of filibusters at the hacienda Santa Rosa. The filibusters were overcome, resulting in a stampede. At the beginning of April, the Costa Rican troops occupied the transit area between the shores of Lake Nicaragua and the Pacific coast and took over the city of Rivas as their bastion. But on April 11, the Costa Ricans, taken by surprise, were attacked by an army led by Walker. After a long day of fighting, with many Costa Rican casualties, the filibusters retired to Granada. The result of this combat was a draw between the two military groups. Soon after, the Costa Rican army abandoned both Rivas and Nicaragua because of an outbreak of cholera among its soldiers. Now in total disarray, the men began the return trip home, with many of them dying along the way.

The Costa Rican expedition to Nicaragua, commanded by president Juan Rafael Mora, ended in failure, its goal having been to throw Walker out of Nicaragua. The Costa Ricans had also fought the filibusters at the San Juan River, in the area surrounding La Trinidad, but had been repelled by them there as well. This particular engagement is of note since, as we will see, it was in this region where the outcome of the antifilibuster war was determined.

From May to September 1856, although the fighting ceased, the international dimension of the conflict became more acute. Central American diplomats in Washington, with the support of other Latin American delegates, expressed to the US government their concern about Walker's occupation of Nicaragua. Costa Rican delegates took their grievances to London, and the events in Nicaragua were followed with great interest by the governments of France and Spain and, more generally, by the European public. The global dimension of the conflict was underscored by the fact that for a short time in the summer of 1856, the US government officially recognized Walker's government (May, *Frente Doméstico* 36–39). Throughout the affair, the British and the US remained in constant communication with regard to the situation on the isthmus. It was also during these months that Walker's popularity reached its height in the US. In Nicaragua and Central America the political and military situation changed dramatically during the summer months. In early June of 1856, Nicaraguan Liberals broke with Walker, declaring him a traitor. Even so, in July he was declared president of the country, following fraudulent elections that had been held one month earlier; in September he reestablished the institution of slavery. The military situation also shifted in July when troops from Guatemala and El Salvador arrived at León to fight against the filibusters. Finally, on September 12, Nicaraguan Liberals and Conservatives signed an agreement to join forces against the invaders. Under this new configuration, on September 14, a Conservative detachment beat a party of filibusters at the hacienda San Jacinto, that victory representing a critical juncture in the hostilities. From October 1856 to the end of the war, the melees were confined mainly to the isthmus of Rivas and the cities of Granada and Masaya. In this series of fights the filibustering forces withdrew first to the city of Granada, where they were besieged by the united Central American armies. Despite the debilitated state of Walker's soldiers, the opposing armies were unable to secure a victory. On the contrary, before burning most of the city of Granada, the filibusters, commanded by Charles Henningsen, a veteran of many European wars, broke the siege at the beginning of December.

Walker's forces adjourned to Rivas and again were beset by the Central American armies, whose numbers were reinforced by the arrival of Costa Rican troops in November and a small contingent from Honduras in December. Nevertheless, Walker's fate was only decided when Costa Rican troops, led by Sylvanus Spencer, a sailor hired and sent by Vanderbilt, captured vessels and fortresses on the San Juan River and at Lake Nicaragua, thus seizing control of the transisthmian

route and cutting the invaders off from their supply sources in the south of the US and on the east coast.

Finally, on May 1, 1857, William Walker, who was by this point known as the King of the Filibusters, surrendered to the commander of a United States Navy frigate, which lay anchored at San Juan del Sur in Rivas. This resolution was accepted by the commander in chief of the Central American armies, Costa Rican general José Joaquín Mora. After a brief stop in Panama Walker returned to the US, where he received a hero's welcome. His adventures in Central America did not, however, end there: in November 1857 he disembarked at the Nicaraguan harbor of San Juan del Norte, along with filibuster troops, in an attempt to regain control over the country. There he was arrested by forces of the United States Navy and sent back to the US. Undaunted, Walker organized several further armed expeditions against Central America. In the last one, he was captured by a British naval contingent on the north coast of Honduras, handed over to a military detachment from that country, and executed at the port of Trujillo on September 12, 1860.

## **The United States and Central America: Crossings and Connections**

The William Walker story shows very clearly the intersecting historical trajectories of Central America and the United States between 1855 and 1857. Such entanglements have constituted a reality that has been a defining feature of this region of the New World, and while often forgotten, has had an impact on the US as well as Central America, dating from the second half of the nineteenth century, through the twentieth, and continuing into the twenty-first. The questions of immigration and drug trafficking in recent times, the Cold War and the fight against communism, the banana enclaves, and the numerous plans for the construction of an interoceanic canal are some of the most important issues in the history of these regional relationships. In other words, the history of Central America and the United States is a history of crossings and connections.

This is also true for the narratives of these historical processes, particularly those reporting on Walker's adventure in Nicaragua. In the last one hundred and fifty years during which US historians have told that story, their versions have created a space of interplay, of both silence about and contestation with those of Central American historians. The latter have always narrated the filibusters' invasion with the US versions in mind, and continuously disputed accounts from other Central American countries. That is also the case for the intractable discordance between the Costa Rican and Nicaraguan versions. In summary, as we will see, the different recountings of this episode have also taken place within a long-established process of connections and crossings.

Before addressing the question of the narratives of this episode, it is necessary to point out that the filibustering of the 1850s was a phenomenon that linked not only Central America but also Mexico and the Caribbean with the United States. Indeed, the history of the filibusters' invasions is part and parcel of the process of US territorial expansion throughout the nineteenth century; it can be regarded as an unforeseen consequence of the process through which the United States launched itself as a land empire at the expense of European maritime empires and that of the newly formed Mexican Republic (Howe 771–89).

Filibusterism was also inspired by the ideas of Manifest Destiny, according to which the United States was summoned by divine providence to dominate and control the entire American continent because of the natural, racial, material, and moral superiority of US inhabitants (Weinberg 1–3). We must remember that the United States' filibusters were not pirates dedicated to mere plundering; rather, they were private agents whose intention was to conquer neighboring countries, establish nation states, and to either annex them to the US or to serve as governors themselves. Walker, for example, planned to found a military state based on slavery, an interoceanic canal, and a solid alliance with the southern states of the US (May, *Southern Dream* 132–35). To this end, Walker initiated a project of state building and was very aware that it was in precisely this arena where the Nicaraguan elites had thus far failed. It must also be reasserted that what was so particular about the filibusters was their role as private agents lacking any formal or official support from the United States government. Certainly, in exceptional cases, this support was conceded, but then it was withdrawn soon afterward, and in other cases, not only was it unofficial but could be rather officious.

The attacks of the filibusters began at the rise of the nineteenth century; their targets were territories of the Spanish Empire, such as Florida and Nueva España, newly independent republics, and even British Canada. But the 1850s were the golden years of filibusterism, the period of the most intense stirrings of Manifest Destiny. This decade saw frequent filibuster expeditions against Mexico, the country most affected by these violent incursions, from California to Baja California and Sonora, from Texas to the Mexican border states, and down to Yucatán. It must be remembered that William Walker began his filibustering career during an expedition against Baja California and Sonora, in 1853–1854, although, granted, it was a spectacular failure. Besides Mexico, other invaded regions included Cuba, Central America, and Ecuador (see Brown). None of these expeditions succeeded, no doubt due to their private nature and improvised character, but they also met resistance, either from the assaulted populations themselves or from governmental forces of the respective countries. Thus, it is significant that the only successful project, at least during an almost two-year period, was William Walker's forays in Nicaragua.

Filibusterism arose in the interstices of the unfinished state building that began in this part of the New World immediately after the independence movements of the 1820s. The case of the Nicaraguan elites asking for Walker's help, for exam-

ple, can only be explained by the fact that until the decade of the 1850s, the country's military and political centralization had scarcely advanced. Equally, the relative effortlessness and the frequency with which filibustering expeditions could emanate from the US are also a clear indicator of the poor level of military control the central government held over its territory as a whole. The federal state lacked the capacity to assert its monopoly of coercive means when confronted with these armed, private agents. The mid-nineteenth century filibustering phenomenon was part of the crossed, interconnected, transnational processes of state building and nation invention in the Western hemisphere, particularly in North America, Central America, and the Caribbean basin: the US process of state formation was influenced by similar processes of state building in the Latin American countries, and vice-versa (Acuña, "Filibusteros" 138–40).

### **On the Method of Analyzing Crossed Historiographies**

With the aforesaid it is clear that my analytical approach is that of a connected or crossed history, consciously situating it outside of the usual methodological nationalism (see Chernilo). The term *crossed history*, originally from the French *histoire croisée*, intends to provide a precise analytical framework for historical situations in which two clearly distinct entities, in this case nation states, are examined in the specific moment when their paths cross in such a way that their histories become entwined. At this point of intersection certain events transpire that affect all the elements at play and chain reactions may transform the nature and trajectory of the intertwined entities (see Werner and Zimmermann). This particularly holds true for the subject of this essay, where a historical process, the antifilibuster war in Central America, as well as the memories and historiographies built upon it, are interwoven objects, the result of connected histories (see Subrahmanyam).

The corpus chosen to trace the memories of these events comprises the works of history – school textbooks and works of fiction were not considered – published in the three countries (Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and the US) from the moment of the events themselves up to the present (see Aguilar, "Guerra"). My aim now is to show how national historiographies and memories operate on the basis of distortion and even manipulation of historical data through biased emphases and silences. My starting point is that historiography, i.e., works written either by amateur or professional historians, constitutes one of the fundamental bases upon which national memories are built and transmitted, employing different means, including school books, press and other media, and various civic ceremonies (Ricoeur 500–10). A feedback model is the appropriate one to apply here in order to understand the links between history and memory, a mutual relationship in which national memories influence the historian's agenda and historiographies produce works for purposes of national remembering (Pomian 339–40).

The historical texts detailing the war against the filibusters tell us much about the moment and the context in which they were created. My research has shown that the manner in which these initial accounts were written determined the succeeding ways in which accounts of the Walker expedition to Nicaragua were retold. To the extent that subsequent historians used these first narratives as sources for their own work, this is not surprising. My diachronic approach goes hand in hand with a structural or thematic analysis where I have looked for elements in common, but above all for the emphases and silences of the corresponding historiographies. It is in this dimension where distortions that reflect national and partisan perspectives appear and where one can see the limits of the manipulation of memory in cases where a series of events is recognized and shared by all historiographies. Finally, that in the United States filibusterism has essentially been moved beyond the horizon of national memory, is indicative of the national and imperial matrices of these historiographies. Consequently, regarding filibusterism, Central American national memories are confronted with the sovereign oblivion of the US.

## The Nicaraguan Memory

The Nicaraguan historiography of the war against Walker was established in the nineteenth century by three historians: the Conservative Jerónimo Pérez, who published his studies about the war in 1865 and 1873 (*Obras*); the Liberal José Dolores Gámez, whose works were printed in 1882 (*Biografía*) and 1889 (*Historia*); and Francisco Ortega, who was a Conservative at the time of the events but a Liberal when he wrote *Cuarenta Años (1838–1878) de Historia de Nicaragua*, published at the end of his life in 1912. Pérez and Ortega were witnesses to and actors in the war. In the context of the war's centenary, the government of dictator Anastasio Somoza García published an official history written by lawyer and amateur historian Ildefonso Palma. This book, titled *La Guerra Nacional. Sus Antecedentes y Subsecuentes Tentativas de Invasión*, repeats the principal themes of the Liberal version of the war. Throughout the past century, other minor works appeared (Salvatierra; Chamorro), but only one is really relevant: Walker's monumental, five-volume biography published by the anti-Sandinista physician and amateur historian Alejandro Bolaños over the period between 1988 and 1994 (Bolaños, *Ojos Grises*), with an abridged version following in 2003 (Bolaños, *Predestinado*).

All these studies reflect the Nicaraguan national memory in the sense that they hover around two main questions: Who was responsible for inviting Walker into the country, and Costa Rica's real motives for intervening in the war. Nicaragua's national historiography and memory have tried to account for the problematic circumstance that initially Walker was not viewed as an invader, but rather a guest. This aspect, even today, has shaped the partisan interpretations of this history,

whether Conservative or Liberal. The fact is that the Liberal leaders hired the filibusters, an action they have attempted to justify and which has been condemned by the Conservatives.

The second bone of contention in Nicaraguan memory is not partisan but nationalistic, that is, a dispute with Costa Rican historiography about the role the latter country played in the war as well as the true intentions that led to its participation. The idea that Costa Rica has always had designs on the San Juan River in particular and, more generally, intended harm to Nicaragua, is deeply rooted in the latter's national imagination. Nicaragua's distrust of Costa Rica is expressed in how the seizure of the interoceanic route by Costa Rican forces, assisted by the sailor-cum-mercenary Spencer, has been interpreted. Attempting to minimize or even erase Costa Rica's contributions to the antifilibuster campaign, some Nicaraguan authors, particularly Bolaños, assign sole credit not to Costa Rica for successfully taking over the route, but to Vanderbilt, who had sent Spencer (Bolaños, *Predestinado* 204–10). Paradoxically, though, Nicaraguan authors unanimously insist that Costa Rica ultimately intended to assume control over the interoceanic transit region. Thus, the general distrust has become interwoven with the historiographies and the memories of the war against Walker (Esgueva 360). Since 2011 a territorial conflict has existed between the two countries over a tiny portion of the San Juan River area, and memories of the antifilibuster war are used by the Nicaraguan government in order to mobilize its citizens. Critical attitudes toward Costa Rica have become more pointed in the Nicaraguan historiography of the war published in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries than those found in the nineteenth (Bolaños, *Predestinado* 101–102). Behind the internal ideological disputes and the nationalistic contest with Costa Rica Nicaraguan public opinion exhibits a consciousness about the enormous and ongoing difficulties of achieving state and national unity, as shown by its history of civil wars and foreign intervention. By comparison, Costa Rica has been more successful in these matters.

Finally, the version presented by Nicaraguan official historiography concerning the role of the United States is ambiguous because it attempts to separate the filibuster episode from US foreign policy, which reflects the ambivalence of the Nicaraguan elites before the 'Americanizing' projects that were imposed by the mission of US empire during several stages of its history. It is interesting to note that the Nicaraguan historiography contains no empirical, well-founded, book-length study of the war against Walker written from a critical and anti-imperialistic perspective. There are, of course, numerous political pamphlets printed on the subject, some examples being those that surfaced during the years of the Sandinista revolution. But by and large, Nicaraguan memories of the war against Walker have concentrated more energy on partisan disputes and the nationalistic contest with Costa Rica than on denouncing Manifest Destiny and United States expansionism, in spite of the US occupation of the country for several decades at the beginning of the last century (see Gobat, *Confronting*).

## Costa Rican Memory

The Costa Rican historiography of the war against the filibusters came to the fore later than that of Nicaragua's. On the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the war, three works were published that might be regarded as founding texts of the Costa Rican national memory: first, an 1888 book-length study by Lorenzo Montúfar, a Guatemalan Liberal who had lived in Costa Rica for about twenty-five years; second, a chapter in an official history of Costa Rica, written by Francisco Montero in 1894; and third, a booklet by Joaquín Bernardo Calvo in 1895. It is symptomatic of the prevalent nationalistic perspective that the Guatemalan Montufar's study is not considered part of the corpus of Costa Rican historiography by some Costa Rican historians (see Acuña, "Historiografía Liberal"). The birth of Costa Rican historiography (with Montúfar's book) was the result of an explicit order by the Costa Rican Liberal governments, in a context of the war in Central America provoked by Justo Rufino Barrios, president of Guatemala, who was trying to impose the reestablishment of the Central American Federation by military force. Therefore Montúfar's study might be considered part of an official historiography, intended to serve the construction of a national memory and a national identity.

At the same time these first studies appeared, Costa Rica was beginning the enshrinement of a popular national hero, Juan Santamaría, who died at the battle of Rivas on April 11, 1856, during an attempt to burn down a building ("El Mesón de Guerra") where the filibusters had set up their stronghold (see Meléndez). Domestically, the hero status of Juan Santamaría has not gone unchallenged. Lorenzo Montúfar was the first to doubt the actual existence of the popular hero, and other authors, following his lead, have argued in the same vein (Montúfar 243–44). On the other hand, a number of writers have also tried to establish empirically that the hero was a real person, not a fictional character, and died a hero. Another minor conflict in Costa Rican memory deals with the participation of Vanderbilt's agent, Spencer, in the interoceanic region's disputes. Indeed, for Montúfar, Spencer's function was fundamental, but for other Costa Rican historians, his role was only that of an auxiliary. The one hundredth anniversary of the war saw the first book-length study written by a Costa Rican historian, published in 1956 (Obregón, *Campaña*), and republished in an extended version in 1991 (Obregón, *Costa Rica*). Before and after the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary, several new works came out, the most influential one being the essay "Lado Oculto" by the journalist and amateur historian Armando Vargas, which was a vindication of Costa Rica's president Juan Rafael Mora (1849–59). Because history as an academic discipline is more developed in Costa Rica, and because Costa Rica has had a more coherent and institutionalized politics of memory with regard to the war, it has a more extensive current bibliography on the war than can be found in Nicaragua, (see Aguilar, *Responsabilidad*). This, in turn, reflects

Costa Rica's more successful efforts in state building and national invention (see Acuña "La Invención" 200–201).

Costa Rican memory is also a counterversion of Nicaraguan and US narratives. The cornerstone of the usual interpretation of the events in Costa Rica is its national identity as a country of exception, both in a Central American and in a Latin American context. Those who write about the war against the filibusters intend to produce edifying, laudatory texts contributing to the discourse of this so-called Costa Rican exceptionalism (see Acuña, "La Invención" 217–18).

As in the Nicaraguan case, the basic tenets of the Costa Rican national memory about the war were established in the late nineteenth century. The narrative is written as a story of heroism, and it serves to confirm the image of the Costa Rican people as happy and successful, both in times of peace and in times of war. Costa Rican historiography constantly struggles to prove that the Costa Rican army defeated Walker, and that this army went to Nicaragua to help defend a sister country in danger, as well as to protect its own liberty and that of the rest of Central America. This is how Costa Rica responds to Nicaraguan accusations of expansionism, a strategy that is often supported by US historians. But Costa Rica's most consistent strategy regarding the Nicaraguan allegations of the former's attempt to divest them of what has been termed the Transit Route, is silence. The only exception so far has been a study by Paul Woodbridge published in 1967 (see Woodbridge), which was ignored until very recently, and some other studies published in the last decade (see Sibaja). This silence functions in tandem with blaming the Nicaraguan elites for inviting Walker to the country in the first place.

Costa Rican memory also takes an ambivalent stance toward the United States, an ally, yet home of the filibusters. The problem is intended to be solved by severing the invaders from any US national background, viewing them as mere bandits. Additionally, Costa Rican historians usually do not include the US filibustering in the historical processes of construction of the United States as an empire, particularly as part of pursuing its interests in Central America and the Caribbean. After 2006, during the commemorations of the war's one hundred-fiftieth anniversary, a phenomenon cropped up that I would call 'Moramania'. This was an attempt to reinvent the figure of president Juan Rafael Mora, raising him to the level of one of the most important characters in the history of Latin America. A small group of intellectuals and politicians, led by Armando Vargas, promoted him as a Costa Rican national hero, and the Costa Rican Legislative Assembly officially declared him "Liberator and National Hero" in 2010. Today, Juan Rafael Mora is a secular saint in the Costa Rican national pantheon (see Vargas, *Juan Rafael*).

Finally, in Costa Rica, throughout the twentieth century the different leftist sectors and the nationalist, anti-imperialist circles have portrayed Walker as an emissary of the 'Yankee Empire'. For example, the war against the filibusters was used as a powerful ideological weapon in the 2006–2008 protests against the Cen-

tral American Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA), which was ultimately imposed by the United States. And just as in Nicaragua, but in a more explicit manner, Costa Rican politicians use the antifilibuster war as artillery in the ongoing border conflict between the two countries regarding the San Juan river.

## The United States: Memory and Oblivion

In the United States, many works of history have been published about William Walker's story; in this essay, I will only discuss the most important ones. Our starting point is the seminal memoir *The War in Nicaragua*, published by Walker himself in 1860, some months prior to his execution in Honduras that same year. This book established a standard narrative and argument structure for understanding the events, holding as a point of reference and model to this day. The story of William Walker, as it has continued to be told by historians in Nicaragua, Costa Rica, and the United States is a dialogue deeply marked by the way it was told for the first time in the United States in the 1850s. Walker's expedition was the subject of heated public discussions in the US: many newspaper and review articles and several booklets and books appeared in the second half of the 1850s, including a widely read account by William Wells, a US adventurer and Walker's friend. In the second half of the nineteenth century, after the US Civil War, several memoirs of the events appeared (e.g., by Charles Doubleday).

Nevertheless, it was only at the beginning of the twentieth century that the first academic study of the Walker episode was published, written by William Scroggs. The Scroggs text, however, remained an exception. In the first half of the twentieth century Walker almost totally disappeared from the US public sphere, although several writers – the journalist Laurence Greene (*The Filibuster*, 1937) being one – were interested in his story. During the Cold War era, the filibuster was the subject of a handful of studies, the most influential of which was Albert Z. Carr's 1963 Walker biography, the best written so far by a US author. And finally, in the context of the Vietnam War and its aftermath, some US scholars have launched studies of Walker, and more generally of the phenomenon of Manifest Destiny's filibustering. Among them the most outstanding are Robert E. May's *The Southern Dream of a Caribbean Empire* and *Manifest Destiny's Underworld*.

All of these investigations of Walker and the filibustering of the 1850s are also reflections on US expansionism, and particularly on the relationship between the two Americas, revealing public opinions held in the United States toward the Americas to the south, particularly Central America. The US historiography is also nationalistic, but stems from a nation that was originally built as an empire, first as one of land and later as a maritime and global empire. In other words, from the beginning of the twentieth century, the US established a relationship of domination over the countries of Central America (see Coatsworth). Thus,

when dealing with Walker's adventure, US historians have in mind both the historical developments and the situation today, which constitute contradictory links between Central America and the US at the time these texts were written.

The distinctive feature of the US position is its inability to recognize the Central Americans as actors in their own right. As a result, in the US version, the story of Walker's expedition is often told as a drama whose only protagonists comprise actors from the United States: the filibusters and their friends; Vanderbilt and Spencer, their enemies; the executive power of the United States, etc. Furthermore, according to US historiography, Central American governments, and especially Costa Rican leaders, were manipulated by the British government, thus denying them historical agency. Although many authors condemn Walker's militaristic and proslavery projects, most ultimately justify them, with different ideologies, depending on when they did their study.

Initially, the matrix of these ideologies could be found in the concept of Manifest Destiny, the set of ideas according to which God had delegated to the United States – because of the racial and moral superiority of its people – the mission of conquering the whole of the New World. This stance underwent several transformations in the one hundred and fifty years between its first applications and the period of the Cold War (see Acuña, “Walker”). The first shift occurred in the late nineteenth century in light of the Spanish-Cuban-American War of 1898 and under the influence of Herbert Spencer's social Darwinism, which claimed that in the struggle for survival, superior races overcome inferior ones (a notion that is still detectable in the studies by Scroggs; and Roche).

The second was a repositioning of ideology to one of uplifting benighted peoples through policies of a ‘benevolent empire’, a process that took place after World War I when the United States established an informal sovereignty in the Caribbean and Central America. From this perspective, Walker came to Central America with the intention of improving the fate of the Central American people, consonant with what the United States was supposedly trying to do in the postwar 1920s (Allen 158–59).

The third transformation arose within the framework of the Alliance for Progress, among whose stated goals was the promotion of democracy and social reforms in Latin American countries, which in the 1960s, at the peak of the Cold War, were considered allies and no longer subordinates of the US. Albert Carr in fact directly compares Walker's project with the Alliance for Progress, asserting that the populations of Central America would be in a better situation if Walker and his filibustering had succeeded (Carr 174–75).

Even the most recent US authors, who have abandoned all pretenses of Manifest Destiny and, on the contrary, currently criticize US imperialism, remain trapped in the frame of methodological nationalism in terms of sources, problems, and themes, focusing predominantly on a US domestic perspective. As a consequence, they carry out their research without consulting Central American documents and usually without quoting Central American authors, apparently because

they do not speak or read Spanish (the books by May and Greenberg are two such examples, among others).

The recurrent themes of the United States historiography – with the exception of the investigations by professional historians after the 1970s, and which owe a great deal to Walker’s own analysis – encompass a political, racialized, and ethnic dimension according to which Central Americans exhibit an incapacity for self-government, live in states of constant chaos and ongoing degeneration, and are hindered economically due to the incompatible combination of indolent inhabitants and an abundance of natural resources. In short, the image that prevails is that of a Central America populated by a dissolute, ‘mongrel race’, thus explaining its supposed inferiority in all these aspects (see Acuña, “Destino Manifiesto”). Bottom line, it is always in light of the ideologies of progress (or lack thereof) by which Central Americans are judged. Both the Central American people and their governing elites require a regeneration, designed and conducted by the United States in order to find the path of historical progress. Thus, US historians’ perspectives overlap with that of the filibusters themselves, both taking for granted and thus perpetuating the alleged ineptitude for agency of people who had suffered the consequences of the war. According to this vision, Walker’s victims lacked the capacity to be actors in their own historical processes. Recent US scholars have largely abandoned these prejudices against Central Americans. At the same time, it is astonishing that they have inherited a blindness that continues to conceive of their country as an empire (see Ferguson). It is only younger researchers who interrogate Walker and the filibusters within the conceptual frame of a critical history of empires (see McGuinness; and Gobat, *Confronting*).

Finally, there is a contradictory interplay of memory and oblivion between Central America and the United States with regard to Walker. Indeed, in spite of the fact that there are more studies about him in the United States than in Central America, and in contrast with the fame he achieved during his lifetime, Walker vanished from the public sphere and the national memory in the United States. Historical studies have so far failed to restore memories of Walker. The tacit pact of oblivion that has endured around this man could be explained by various factors, but the main one is that breaking that arrangement obviously has the potential to illuminate the dark side of the civilizing mission that the United States has assumed on the American continent (see Harrison).

## Conclusion

In this essay I have examined a secondary, but not irrelevant episode of US territorial expansionism, attempting to highlight the entanglements of its history with the history of a strategic region of the New World, that is, Central America. But I have also argued that in order to recognize and understand these entanglements we need to employ a more critical lens and abandon the confining framework of

methodological nationalism, adopting an approach of connected histories or *histoire croisée*. I have tried to apply this approach to the historical accounts of these events, written both in Central America and the United States, and I have shown how those recitals are situated between dialogue and silence or even denial. As a rule, the historical chronicles written in the United States about this particular chapter ignore what has been published in Central America, while Central American historians maintain a keen eye on the brand of historiography that comes out of the US.

I have also tried to address the question of the relationships between history and memory. National memory is mainly built upon historical writings. Walker's adventure has been the object of investigation mostly by amateur historians (such as journalists, lawyers, and politicians), with few scholars devoting any attention to it. Additionally, most of those academic works belong to the traditional and outdated fields of political and military history. Only in the last forty years has filibusterism been investigated by professional historians, mainly in the United States. Nicaragua, on the other hand, currently lacks scholarly studies about Walker, and in Costa Rica it has only been in the last decade that several professionals in the fields of social and cultural history have started to conduct research on this topic.

The most interesting dimension of these entangled histories is that they show how national memories operate, with emphases, silences, and even apathy. Hence, in the United States Walker's story was forgotten by the end of the nineteenth century, and still remains almost totally absent as a subject in the public sphere. However, it occupies a special niche in Costa Rican and Nicaraguan national memories. Recently, the respective national memories of Walker's expedition have served as a cudgel in the quarrels between the states of Nicaragua and Costa Rica as well as in their domestic politics, particularly when denouncing 'Yankee Imperialism'. In brief, it is impossible to comprehend the national identity and memory in either Nicaragua or Costa Rica without referring to the unfolding of this story from the middle of the nineteenth century and to the main character, a man who believed that he was a vehicle chosen by Manifest Destiny.

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## **US Scholars in South America and the Question of Imperial Knowledge, 1900–1945<sup>1</sup>**

RICARDO D. SALVATORE

In the aftermath of the Spanish-American War of 1898, the US occupation governments in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines experimented with colonial administration, implementing reforms in a broad range of areas, among them municipalities, elementary education, law enforcement, the judiciary, political parties, and public sanitation. Soon, these governments came to realize that such reforms necessitated a knowledge of local conditions and traditions in order for the new policies to be effective. At the same time, it seemed that the new dependencies could not enjoy the benefits of modern government, civilized interaction, and market society without the instruction and guidance of US experts. The United States then started to assume the position of a teacher in relation to its new dependencies.

It was as if the United States was saying to its new colonies: “We should teach you lessons in self-government and modern civilization, so you can manage your affairs and prosper, with our capital and expertise, and under our continued supervision.” This original proposition entailed a connection between US overseas supremacy and expert knowledge that would persist over time. Implicit in this pronouncement was the opening of a two-way circulation of knowledge. This exchange could be boiled down to two propositions: the United States needed to know more about Hispanic American culture in order to administer its new dominions in the Caribbean and Central America and to extend US influence into South America. Secondly, Latin Americans needed to know more about US institutions, society, and culture in order to learn the ways of capitalist development, democratic governance, and modern, civilized sociability.

US scholars took up the challenge implicit in this proposition, with a vision to fulfill the American part of the deal: to know as completely as possible the history, present condition, and potential evolution of Latin America. Though many scholars have argued that the role of expert elites (e.g., economists and public health professionals) should be included in the study of US imperialism in the Americas, little research effort has been directed toward assessing the general

1 This essay builds on a more detailed study to be published by Duke University Press under the title *Disciplinary Conquest. U.S. Scholarly Engagement in South America, 1900–1945*.

influence of expert, disciplinary knowledge in the making of the US hemispheric hegemony.<sup>2</sup> Though many would agree that the US Caribbean Empire<sup>3</sup> ushered in a recurrent flow of expert counsel to the new dependencies, few have examined how disciplinary knowledge helped to redefine US foreign policy in the region.

In this essay, I examine US scholars' intellectual efforts to describe the diversity of South American realities in a variety of academic disciplines, presenting their interventions as constitutive of new domains of regional knowledge that rendered South America more understandable or legible to US policy makers. My study looks at five scholars (archaeologist Hiram Bingham, historian Clarence Haring, sociologist Edward Ross, political scientist Leo Rowe, and geographer Isaiah Bowman) whose work was crucial in laying the foundations for what later came to be known as Latin American Studies. This was the product of an interdisciplinary amalgamation of disciplinary knowledges that concentrated on said region and was part of the postwar rearrangement of disciplines called Area Studies.<sup>4</sup> I maintain that these early scholarly inquiries into the region's antiquity, society, geography, politics, and history constituted a new set of perspectives from which South America was reinterpreted and located within the geopolitical conceptions and concerns of the US academy.

To explicate the nature and implications of their 'disciplinary interventions', I pay close attention to various activities that were constitutive of the disciplines these scholars represented: defining the object of study, presenting the relevant research questions, collecting evidence, and assessing the importance of their findings. In addition, I present suggestions that could help to explain how this new knowledge spilled over into the arena of US foreign-policy making. This paper examines the transition in US foreign policies from military intervention to Good Neighbor Policy and tries to relate this momentous change to the intellectual reassessment of South America by US scholars and intellectuals, a strategy I call a 'rediscovery', an allusion to the constant attempts of US scholars to compare their work of 'scientific discovery' with the sixteenth-century discoveries that led to the establishment of Iberian colonialism.

The US diplomatic rapprochement with the region coincided with an increase in the scholarly research on and publications about the nations south of Panama, a territory purported to have remained relatively unknown until the first years of the twentieth century. As a consequence, South America, having up to this point

2 Exceptions are studies on the influence exerted by expert advice in economics and public health. See, for example, Cueto, Drake, and Rosenberg. See also Anderson.

3 The term refers to US possessions, protectorates, and dependencies in the Caribbean, during the period 1898–1934. The term was used early on by William Shepherd (1920), and more recently by Lester Langley (1983). Whereas some authors have argued that these dependencies were new forms of an informal empire where the US exerted indirect rule (see McCormick), most coincide that these forms of intervention were closer to the model of formal empires. See Perkins; and Pletcher. Similar terms, such as American Mediterranean, convey the same idea, see Langley, *Struggle*.

4 For a critical view of Area Studies and its complicity with Cold War politics, see: Chomsky; Rafael; and Wang.

been the land of economic opportunities, now became a field of scientific inquiry. This double transformation – in diplomatic approaches and in scholarly interest – made evident the need to connect expert knowledge in the humanities and the social sciences with the discussion of the US role in the hemisphere or, more pointedly, to reevaluate the productivity of potential paths leading to US regional hegemony. In support of my assertion of the importance of these endeavors as foundational bases for the discipline of Latin American Studies, I will then discuss the major findings of five ‘enterprises of knowledge’ – archaeology, history, sociology, political science, and geography – through which the territory of South America has been generally perceived and treated in both political and academic realms. The coalescing event was the ‘discovery’ of Machu Picchu in 1911, which generated an intense interest in the study of Andean antiquity in US universities. The realization that South America in general, and each country in particular, was a mosaic of fragmented and disconnected natural-human regions reinforced the notion that the South American republics had not yet completed the process of nation building.

Finally, I will summarize the visions of inter-American relations offered by these different scholars, arguing that profound similarities existed between their views and the Good Neighbor policies. These new, comprehensive scholarly inquiries interacted productively with the US foreign-policy establishment and business communities to generate an enduring research interest in the region and the involvement of leading US universities in the development of a vast apparatus of inter-American cultural cooperation. US scholarly interventions provided the basis for a multidisciplinary Panopticon, which for a century would monitor the progress of South American societies. By doing so, US academia became complicit in the increasing ascendancy of the US in the region.

## **From Military to Disciplinary Interventions**

Traditionally, historians of US-Latin American relations have presented the transition between Big Stick and Good Neighbor policies as one in which the United States gradually softened the nature of its engagement with the region, from direct political and military interventions to one of persuasion, commercial agreements, and institutionalized discussions. Between the two approaches (the use of military power during the administrations of William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt and the cultural diplomacy of the Franklin D. Roosevelt years), historians posit a third approach called ‘Dollar Diplomacy’, a policy of pressure and blackmail conducted by US banks, using the appeal of fresh loans to credit-hungry Latin American nations.<sup>5</sup> Big Stick and Dollar Diplomacy appear in the narra-

5 The study *Dollar Diplomacy* (1925) by Nearing and Freeman stands as the classic denunciation of this method. Dollar Diplomacy generated substantial contemporary criticism: including Munro; Bruere; and Feis. For more recent accounts of this instrument

tive as early, clumsy attempts in a learning process heading toward the politics of the Good Neighbor.<sup>6</sup>

Around the time of the First World War, perhaps pressured by increasing criticism about its activities in Central America and the Caribbean, the US administration began to consider the construction of a more peaceful interaction with its southern neighbors. This policy of rapprochement was evident in the ideals of the Pan-Americanist movement of the postwar period, and was later condensed into different documents and speeches that marked the shift toward the Good Neighbor policies of the 1930s.<sup>7</sup> These new forms of diplomatic interplay with Latin America were less militaristic and bullish and presented, at least at the level of governmental rhetoric, the possibility of a full ‘cultural’ engagement with the region. This new cultural diplomacy by necessity required better mutual knowledge and understanding between the two Americas. One could argue that the calls for enhancing US knowledge of South America were a common feature of business and international relations with and political rhetoric about the region, going back at least to the turn of the century. Yet, it is remarkable that so few scholars have examined the parallel and complementary relationship between the growth of academic knowledge about Latin America and the expansion of US economic primacy and cultural influence over the region.<sup>8</sup>

In this essay, I contend that since the start of the twentieth century<sup>9</sup> the United States had pursued a dual policy toward the region: conducting military-political interventions in the small Central American and Caribbean nations while refusing to directly interfere in the territories and internal politics of South American nations. Persuasion and policy advice via bank loans and foreign direct investment were permissible with regard to South American nations, but direct intervention was ruled out. The basis for this differential treatment of countries within Latin America was a cognitive divide (one I term the Great Divide), which maintained that to the south of the Panama Canal existed nations politically, socially, and culturally more developed than in the circum-Caribbean, nations better prepared to defend themselves from attacks by European powers.

Additionally, I argue that this change in the US policy toward Latin America was based on a ‘rediscovery’ of a space that remained little known to US

of intervention, see Drake; Rosenberg; and Veseer. For the contemporary perseverance of this practice, see Sheinin.

6 After WWII, United States policy concerning Latin America was guided by the larger confrontation between West and East (‘capitalist democracy’ versus ‘communist despotism’), resulting in a greater tolerance of dictators if they defended the dual cause of democracy and capitalism.

7 Analysts of the Good Neighbor Policy have underscored that the 1930 Clark Memorandum (which revised the Monroe Doctrine and its related Roosevelt Corollary and argued for reining in US interventions in South America) marked the start of an era of friendlier relations between the two Americas.

8 An important exception is Mark Berger’s study *Under Northern Eyes*.

9 Perhaps going back to the 1895–97 Venezuelan boundary controversy in which the United States affirmed the Monroe Doctrine in a dispute between Venezuela and Great Britain. See Schoultz 107–124.

Americans at the close of the nineteenth century: South America. Hence, the new knowledge about the territories south of Panama played a crucial role in the transition from the Big Stick to the Good Neighbor Policy. The rapprochement of US foreign-policy makers with this region was based upon a new understanding of the geography, history, politics, society, and cultures of Latin America, and relied on recently gathered evidence. The reports of geographers, sociologists, archaeologists, political scientists, economists, and historians helped to paint more current and all-embracing prospects of South America that tended to reinforce and, at the same time, complicate the cognitive Great Divide. In particular, scholars tended to support the foreign-policy position that the Southern Cone nations had acquired a new level of social development and governability that made them partners in the ‘civilizing effort’ in which the United States was engaged. The new research conducted by US scholars represented South America as an assemblage of different regions with different potentialities for economic, social, and political development. This diversity posed new challenges to both US diplomacy and US institutions of higher learning. I have called these knowledge enterprises ‘disciplinary interventions’ to the extent that they conveyed a new form of engagement – through direct observation, categorical description, and regionally focused generalizations – which incorporated the subcontinent into the orbit of emerging disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences in the United States.

These ‘disciplinary interventions’ were motivated by a variety of factors, among them the search for knowledge by US scholars and the institutions they represented, the pressure created by some of the foremost figures in US foreign policy to ‘better understand’ the region, and the tendency of new and old disciplines (archaeology, regional geography, sociology, history, and political science, among others) to go beyond the nation’s borders to corroborate theories and propositions. Undertaking these new observations promised to validate general propositions of science and hence promote the expansion and consolidation of specialized knowledge in US research institutions. As I shall submit, South America became the new field of inquiry for a variety of disciplinary knowledges in the United States. The field work conducted by US archaeologists, sociologists, geographers, historians, political scientists, and other expert observers was part of a larger ‘enterprise of knowledge’ through which US knowledge producers tried to render the diverse conditions and realities of South America more visible and readable.

The word intervention takes on a positive connotation when associated with intellectual work, being regarded as a crucial activity of democratic societies. Employed by diplomatic and military historians, though, the term refers chiefly to military and administrative intrusions into previously independent national communities. In this second sense, the word is synonymous with harsher forms of imperial engagement: colonialism, dependencies, custom receiverships, tutelage, etc. My usage of the term in connection with the production of knowledge intends to locate these activities in close relationship with US imperial ambitions.

To the extent that US scholars took possession, in the name of their disciplines, of the geography, economy, antiquity, or political systems of South America, and from these initial acts of possession built an array of specialized knowledges that claimed to account for the history and present conditions of the region, they can be dubbed ‘disciplinary interventions.’ Once condensed into a disciplinary set of regional knowledges – Latin American Studies – these sets of knowledges claimed precedence in enunciating claims of truth about the region and were presented as sources of guidance to the nations south of Panama.

## **South America as Field of Inquiry and Engagement**

Throughout the nineteenth century, for the general US public South America remained *terra incognita* and a ‘land of curiosities’, a territory of racial miscegenation, frequent revolutions, popular Catholicism, and economic backwardness (see Salvatore, “North American Travel Narratives”). With time, however, the ‘land of curiosities’ burgeoned into a field of interest for different scientific disciplines. Beginning in the early 1900s, and particularly after the 1906 South American tour by Secretary of State Elihu Root, intellectual curiosity about South America increased significantly. Suddenly, the subcontinent appeared as a great reservoir of data and also as a great laboratory where hypotheses about the course of social, economic, political, and even environmental conditions could be tested.

Academic interest in the region increased, parallel to the rise of US investment and commercial opportunities and was also simultaneous with the reestablishment of closer diplomatic ties between the United States and South America. Yet it is difficult to determine whether the scientific study of South America occurred in direct response to the declamations by representatives of the US business community for ‘better understanding’ or those calls promulgated by US foreign policy-makers. Books of advice for commercial travelers were usually inclined to emphasize the need for the adequate training of business representatives, strongly urging that they learn Spanish and Portuguese as well as South American customs and traditions before traveling to the region. This position was echoed by politicians and businessmen who at the beginning of the twentieth century pressed for a better trained foreign service. Executive orders issued in 1905 and 1909 established entry examinations for admittance to the US consular service, requiring candidates to be knowledgeable in foreign languages, US history and institutions, diplomatic procedures, and the history of Europe, South America, and the Far East. In all these mandates, knowledge was deemed instrumental in the pursuit of increased commercial interactions and better relations with the southern republics. But nothing in the discourse of business or diplomacy anticipated the start of a ‘scientific conquest’ of the region. Schools and colleges of commerce could easily accommodate demands for training in languages and business methods without creating specialized areas of regional knowledge.

It was the work of scholars working in US universities that built the edifice of Latin American Studies, converging different disciplinary perspectives. Perhaps it was the Pan-American Scientific Congress held in Santiago, Chile in 1908–1909 that motivated US scholars to travel to South America and, from these prospecting trips, to envision and design ambitious research projects in the areas of geography, archaeology, finance, politics, history, and sociology. Most of the US delegates to this first inter-American meeting of scientists became prominent Latin Americanists.<sup>10</sup> We know that their participation triggered a series of expeditions that stimulated scientific interest in the area. Hiram Bingham took advantage of the mission to embark on an exploration trip from Buenos Aires to Potosí along the *camino real* (royal road), before arriving in Santiago.<sup>11</sup> Information gathered on this trip led to his later ‘discovery’ of the Inca citadel of Machu Picchu in 1911.

Starting roughly during the same time period, between 1906 and 1909, US historians, sociologists, geographers, archaeologists, and government specialists (among others) joined exploration expeditions or research travels aimed at evaluating the actual conditions and developmental problems of South America. A result of these knowledge-gathering campaigns was the emergence of a more comprehensive and empirically informed vision of the subcontinent. Gradually, scientific interventions expanded until the region became a habitual destination for US researchers in the 1940s.

## A Harvest of New Knowledge

The research designs proposed by Bingham, Bowman, Rowe, Ross, and Haring were ambitious, encyclopedic, and imperial. Preliminary results from this research attracted the attention of new researchers to these disciplines. The new knowledge served as the basis for teaching materials in undergraduate and graduate education in the United States, and the questions raised by these pioneer scholars in turn helped to build the edifice of Latin American Studies as it stood in the 1940s.

A brief survey of these disciplinary undertakings and their ‘discoveries’ gives us an approximate idea of the dimension and scope of this collective intellectual conquest, allowing us to query the extent to which these research projects, ‘discoveries,’ and new interpretations about South American realities influenced US foreign policy. At first sight, these scholarly engagements seemed so diverse and unconnected as to defy the idea of a common enterprise of knowledge: discoveries of Inca ruins that led to an intense interest in South American ‘antiquity’; the

10 The US delegation included Archibald Coolidge from Harvard University, Bernard Moses from the University of California, William Shepherd from Columbia University, Paul Reinsch from the University of Madison, Leo Rowe from the University of Pennsylvania, and Hiram Bingham from Yale University.

11 At the end of the congress in Santiago, Bingham and his assistant, Clarence Hay, went back to Bolivia and Peru, reaching Cuzco in February 1909. See Bingham, *Portrait* 90–95.

demarcation of natural-human regions according to the dictates of physical-economic geography; assessments about the transfer of elements of the US Constitution to colonial dependencies; historiographical projects to write a more balanced Hispanic American colonial history; and finally the acknowledgement of the persistence of coloniality in Andean societies.

### **Hiram Bingham and Andean Antiquity**

After ‘discovering’ the ruins of Machu Picchu in July 1911, US archaeologist Hiram Bingham immediately commenced churning out a series of works interpreting the nature of the site.<sup>12</sup> He presented the hidden citadel as the last capital where the Incas had taken refuge in the early sixteenth century while hiding from Spanish soldiers. But it was also a site of spiritual retirement for virgins who had dedicated their lives to the cult of the sun. In addition, he argued that Machu Picchu could have been Vitcos, the last refuge of Manco Inca and his sons, and that another set of ruins nearby could be Tampu-Tocco, the supposed cradle of Inca civilization. Clearly, he insisted, Machu Picchu was also a military fortress where Inca warriors could keep at bay the intrusion of ‘barbarians’ from the southern forests; in any case, the hidden citadel had remained ‘unseen’ by Spaniards for the previous three hundred years.<sup>13</sup>

Before these different hypotheses could be submitted to archaeologists’ criticism, Yale University – in cooperation with the National Geography Society – launched an exhaustive and multidisciplinary research expedition that investigated the Urubamba valley near Cuzco from 1911 to 1915. The Yale Peruvian Expedition brought back a rich harvest of information. Skeletal remains, pottery, metalwork, and textiles recovered from a variety of Inca ruins contributed to the establishment of the field of Andean archaeology. The presence of perforated craniums among the finds launched the idea that the Incas had been able to perform cerebral surgery; bronze works affirmed that they had mastered the arts of metallurgy, and the prevalence of females skeletons led Bingham to believe that he had encountered the remains of the ‘Virgins of the Sun’. In addition, the expedition brought back collections of fauna and flora, rocks and soil, which enhanced the understanding of Andean geology and biology. More importantly, Bingham planned to use the discoveries made at Machu Picchu to rewrite the history of the Spanish conquest of Peru, replacing it with a more nuanced version.

12 In 1912–1913, Bingham wrote articles for popular magazines such as *Harper’s* and the *National Geographic*. He published academic articles detailing some of the discoveries in several US journals, including *American Anthropologist* (1910 and 1914), the *Bulletin of the American Geographical Society* (1911 and 1912), the *Geographic Journal* (1914), among others. It took him time to put his findings about Machu Picchu into book form: *Inca Land* was published in 1922, *Machu Picchu, a Citadel of the Incas* in 1930, and his final book *Lost Cities of the Incas* in 1948.

13 The hidden nature of the Inca citadel was a description Bingham repeated in press interviews, magazine articles, and his own books.

### **Isaiah Bowman: Geographical and Political Fragmentation in Peru**

The geographic reconnaissance of the Southern Andes along the 73rd meridian west by geographer Isaiah Bowman in 1911–13 became a model piece of regional geography. Bowman returned from his travels with a completely new grasp of the region's resources, cultural diversity, and spatial fragmentation. In his study *The Andes of Southern Peru*, published in 1916, he proposed that isolated settlements separated by long distances were the main obstacle to Peru's economic progress, i.e., the creation of a national market, and that this geographical segmentation (an effect of coastal valleys, highland settlements, eastern dry valleys, and forest lands) also prevented the unfolding of a true national consciousness. As long as Peru remained a mosaic of varied and unconnected regions, each cultivating its own forms of sociability and parochial culture, and resisting rule by the central government in Lima, the country would fail to become a true nation (Bowman, *Andes* 44–45, 69). Analyzing the relationship between humans and their natural environments, Bowman gained insights into the political and economic secrets of Peru, a country dominated by local *caudillos* and beset by local revolts, the leaders of which found plenty of uncharted space in the canyons of the *cordillera* in which to hide.

In another book, *Desert Trails of Atacama* (1924), Bowman presented the Atacama Desert as a space full of life, a peculiar ecological niche whose local inhabitants had successfully adapted to the harsh environment. While foreign corporations had created enclaves for the extraction of minerals and were completely dependent on provisions from local peasants and herders for their subsistence, Bowman claimed that indigenous peasants were the true conquerors of the Atacama, not Spanish conquistadors or Peruvian planters (*Desert Trails* 343). He described the tenacity of native mercantile circuits that had first survived the invasion of Spaniards, and later that of US, Chilean, and British mining companies. He also 'discovered' that the true El Dorado of the desert was water, precisely underground water pools that could be tapped to create patches of verdure and even served to support small-scale agriculture. The desert's environment – dry and underpopulated – was not propitious for the penetration of US capital and technology or for the spread of an American-style modernity based on mass consumerism. The great treasures that Westerners could extract from the desert and the Puna grasslands were thus, according to Bowman, supposedly pre-modern interactions between humans and their environment.

### **Leo Rowe: Lessons in Colonial Governance**

Grounded in his experience in the administration of colonial dependencies (first in Puerto Rico, later in Panama), political scientist Leo Rowe opined that in US overseas possessions a dual process of transition had occurred. First, the colonies were governed by the military and occupation governments, but authority was soon handed over to a civil governor. The mission of US interim governments was thus to facilitate the transition to home rule, by gradually organizing munic-

ipalities, then the judicial system, and then the legislative, before relinquishing the executive to the vote of native citizens. In both transitions (military to civil, and foreign to native), Rowe contended, US constitutional principles applied: the occupation government was subject to US congressional review, and the new civilian authorities were subjected to the laws – following US constitutional principles – passed by the occupation government. To this extent, he argued, basic liberties and individual guarantees enjoyed by US citizens were afforded to colonial subjects.

The problem, in Rowe's view, was not so much the transfer of US institutions, but their effective adoption by the colonial population. Organizing public sanitation, school systems, and judiciaries did not seem as complicated as overcoming the particularities of 'Hispanic American culture'. The American electoral system, for example, metamorphosed into something else when applied to Caribbean populations, which tended to turn party politics into family feuds. Native legislators jockeyed to grant subsidies to various companies and projects without regard for their costs as long as family members profited; hence, corruption soon riddled these new administrations. The most important lesson Rowe derived from his experience in Puerto Rico and Panama was that a hybrid legal system that combined Anglo-American legal principles with Spanish legal traditions would work best in the transition of Caribbean societies to political autonomy.

From 1906 to 1909, though, Rowe visited Brazil, Argentina, and Chile, a trip that changed his view of 'Hispanic American culture'. His journey revealed nations well on the road toward economic advancement, whose populations had adopted European habits and fashions, and where political stability had prevailed for over fifty years. In a case study of Argentina, Rowe came to the conclusion that the country's government, while federalist on paper, was centralist in reality. Presidential power often eclipsed that of the legislative and the judiciary, and the president frequently intervened in provincial governments to ensure loyalty to his party. Rowe carefully observed the evolution of public opinion and government in postindependence Argentina (such as the government of Juan Manuel de Rosas). With reservations, he came to the conclusion that the *caudillo* governments of the period 1820–1860 represented popular demands for social equality and federal government and were, for this reason, legitimate. It was, however, unwise to expect that countries like Argentina, which had replicated the US Constitution, would develop the same type of constitutional government as that of the United States.

Rowe came to understand that, despite electoral reforms, the modern republics of the Southern Cone were still controlled by elites, and that 'men of letters' (elite men who often served in diverse roles such as government officials, public intellectuals, and successful entrepreneurs) had a significant influence on the running of the government. Hence, in his 1917 essay, "Bringing the Americas Together," he articulated the idea that 'intellectual cooperation' among the illustrious elites

of the subcontinent was the best way to build the hemispheric union imagined by the expansionist United States.

### **Clarence Haring: A Common History for Latin America**

Between 1918 and 1947 Harvard historian Clarence Haring produced the most thorough history of colonial Spanish America that had been written up to that point.<sup>14</sup> In his books and articles he analyzed how various policy errors committed by the Spanish Crown, at least as early as the seventeenth century, had led to the economic decline of its empire, both in Spain and in the American colonies. Haring directed his criticism against the Spanish commercial monopoly, the policy of re-creating a European aristocracy on American soil, and the widespread corruption that corroded the colonial administration as a result of the sale of public offices.

From his study of the workings of the Spanish colonial empire, Haring shifted to a comparative history of Hispanic America and the United States. He suggested that the two Americas shared a parallel history, only diverging in the nineteenth century with the onset of industrialization in the United States. He encountered many similarities in the long-term trajectories of Hispanic and Anglo America: the settlement by dissident religious communities or people rejected by their motherlands; an identical quest for gold, glory, and liberty among the first conquerors; a similar feeling of oppression by colonial residents, which eventually culminated in wars of independence; and finally, the attempt to create republican governments guided by the same ideals, followed by a long process of national unification and constitutional governments modeled on US institutions. For Haring, race and the natural environment could explain both the similarities and the differences in the economic, social, political, and cultural itineraries of the two Americas. Like other contemporary observers, Haring identified resemblances (and possibly, a future convergence) between Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and the United States – an optimistic perspective based on the assertion that these countries had already achieved economic progress and political stability by the mid-1920s. However, throughout the financial crisis and economic depression of the 1930s, Haring was hard put to explain why these apparently republican and democratic countries experienced a wave of military coups.

### **Edward Ross: Racial Oppression and Aristocratic Government in the Andes**

In *South of Panama* (1915), his all-encompassing critique of Andean societies, sociologist Edward Ross singled out the Spanish colonial legacy as the most important cause for the persistence of ‘premodern’ forms of social relations and

14 His most important studies on the colonial period were *Trade and Navigation between Spain and the Indies* (1918) and *The Spanish Empire in America* (1947). In-between these works, he published two books that addressed foreign-policy concerns and the idea of a parallel trajectory for the history of the two Americas: *South America Looks at the United States* (1928) and *South American Progress* (1934).

aristocratic governments. His sociological portrait of Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia depicted nations rampant with racial oppression, landlord despotism, and aristocratic tutelage. In Peru, for example, he documented the widespread use of ‘debt peonage’ as a way to retain indigenous workers from the highlands in the coastal and eastern valley plantations. Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia shared ‘premodern’, feudal social relations that were difficult to overcome, given the preferences of their elites for a hierarchical society divided along ethnic-racial lines. Southern Chile was different, to the extent that its elites, in their attempt to ‘civilize’ indigenous peoples, imitated British practices. There Ross found that German immigrants were building a crude agrarian democracy, while English missionaries were teaching Mapuche youths the basics of the work ethic. But Ross encountered a free-labor economy with more egalitarian social relations in Argentina, a nation that, transformed by massive European immigration, had been able to break the legacy of the colonial past. Though a eugenicist who favored selective immigration into the United States, Ross projected an optimistic vision for the future of the Southern Cone. He found that Chile and Argentina were the only socially modern nations, able to build democratic sociability.

Comprehensiveness, a multidisciplinary approach, as well as strong personal ambitions characterized these early research endeavors. Hiram Bingham considered himself the first white man to have seen the Inca ruins of Machu Picchu – and so he accepted the title of “second Pizarro,” given to him by newspapers (Salvatore, “Local versus Imperial Knowledge” 69). He believed that his research on the Urubamba valley would begin to unravel the mystery of the origin of man in South America. Similarly, Isaiah Bowman, as head of the American Geographic Society, undertook the most ambitious cartographic project of his time: between 1922 and 1945 his cartographers produced maps of the entire subcontinent on a scale of one million. No geographic society had ever charted a whole continent in such detail. Leo Rowe’s proposal for inter-American intellectual cooperation as the basis for a workable coalition of American nations held over time. His ideas about international arbitration, the creation of a regional court of international law, and the consensual solution to problems of hemispheric defense were later adopted by the Organization of American States. Clarence Haring’s ambitious program for a comparative history of the Americas, though representing a minority position at the time, nevertheless was influential enough to be taken up by the Pan American Institute of Geography and History in the 1940s. And Edward Ross circulated his findings about class government and racial oppression in the Andes through sociological tracts that were assigned as compulsory reading in sociology courses across the United States.<sup>15</sup>

15 See for instance, Ross, *The Principles of Sociology* (1920), and *The Outlines of Sociology* (1923).

## Scholars' Visions of US Hemispheric Hegemony

Widespread criticism of US interventionist policies in the circum-Caribbean catalyzed the rethinking of US scholars about their country's role in the hemisphere. While Hiram Bingham published a devastating critique of the Monroe Doctrine in 1913 (*The Monroe Doctrine, an Obsolete Shibboleth*), Clarence Haring brought back from his 1926 tour across South America a clear message to US foreign-policy makers: making use of their access to local periodicals and the book industry, the South American intelligentsias had created enough distrust about the policies and purposes of the United States for anti-American feelings to become widespread (Haring, *South America Looks at the United States*, 19, 60, 70). Local intellectuals and politicians – such as the Peruvian José Carlos Mariátegui, the Venezuelan Rufino Blanco Fombona, the Argentinian Manuel Baldomero Ugarte, and Víctor Raúl Haya de la Torre, also from Peru – were beginning to form anti-imperialist leagues and nationalist political parties that warned against the ‘Yankee peril’. The discovery of widespread anti-American sentiments in South America made clear to US foreign-policy experts that a policy of persuasion or appeasement was necessary to conquer the hearts and minds of South Americans.

Earlier than Haring, political scientist Leo Rowe had already put out a call for a strategy of ‘cultural engagement’ with the South American neighbors of the US. His 1917 essay on “intellectual cooperation” posited that the best way to recruit South American intellectuals and statesmen for the cause of Pan-Americanism consisted of establishing partnerships for the study of common problems (“The Development of Cultural Ties”). The most direct means to attain this cooperation was the implementation of a program of student and professor exchanges between US and Latin American universities. US philanthropists and the government could contribute funds to promote these educational exchanges, which in turn would facilitate the networking of intellectuals in the two Americas.

While most US scholars leaned toward attributing much of the backwardness in the region to the impact of Spanish colonialism, some of them looked with caution at the deployment of a modern empire of commodities, technology, expertise, and culture. Geographer Bowman, for instance, affirmed that given the great difficulties presented by the natural environment, modern US technology would be insufficient to change traditional ways of life in the Andes. Foreign enclaves like mines, rubber plantations, and nitrates concentration plants would come and go, leaving among the local populations of the Puna or in the desert of Atacama few traces of their passing. In Bowman's view, even the construction of costly railroads would not transform a land of isolated small settlements with a limited desire for modern commodities into a thriving market for US mass products. It was difficult to see how US goods and culture would spread in the vast space of South America without the cooperation of local elites. Hence, it was necessary to imagine new forms of neocolonial engagement. In particular, the scholars I reviewed tended to support the idea that the US should invest its energies in the

study of the subcontinent so as to enlist the new areas of influence by way of culture: that is, a 'benevolent empire' that promoted cultural exchanges, thus facilitating the sway of the US through intellectual cooperation and assisted by new forms of regional knowledge.

Leo Rowe favored a model of US hegemony built on the notion of "influence through example" ("Bringing the Americas Together" 276). He recommended applying the lessons learned in the Caribbean possessions of building a more abiding and cost-effective informal empire in South America. The United States should present itself willing to dispense advice in the areas of technology, public sanitation, education, social welfare, economics, and international law, using the superiority of its research institutions. He thought of the Pan-American Union as a commonwealth of nations working together under US leadership and expert counsel. The US should commit itself to providing Latin American nations with all the tools needed to raise their standards of living; in return, the US public would receive the cultural richness of Latin America: its music, literature, dances, religiosity, and customs.

Leo Rowe can be considered the Lord Macaulay of the twentieth-century Pax Americana. His position was that US experts and scholars should create enduring connections with Latin American intellectuals to produce the illusion of partnership in the production of knowledge and a more elevated conception of the United States among the southern neighbors' intelligentsias. In addition, his experience in South America and his appreciation of the cultural richness of the southern republics sparked Rowe's imagining of an Anglo-Hispanic complementarity on the terrain of culture. Whereas Hispanic American literature, music, folklore, and art should be better appreciated by the US public, the Pan-American Union and the State Department should also make efforts to spread US films, music, and literature across South America. This cultural diplomacy would include sponsoring tours of the region by Hollywood movie stars, jazz musicians, and other representatives of US mass culture.

The work of Clarence Haring pointed in the same direction. Haring was convinced that the US empire had provided public goods to Caribbean people in the form of urban sanitation, a system of well-trained police forces, municipal administration, and liberal legal reforms. Similar arrangements could be extended to South America without the need of colonial interventions. For him, the Pan-Americanist movement could contribute to building the infrastructure of a sustainable hemispheric peace, insulating the continent from the war-prone politics of Europe. The Harvard historian also put his ideas of intellectual cooperation and Pan-Americanism into scholarly practice. In the 1920s and 1930s Haring strove to achieve a consensus concerning the necessity for a comparative history of the two Americas. If historians of North and South America could agree that they shared a single set of social and political values and that their countries could converge toward similar levels of progress and modernity, the hemisphere

could become a commonwealth of peace, integrated economic flows, and shared values.

Both Rowe and Haring saw the US informal empire in Latin America as a space for the free interchange of commodities, capital flows, technology, and ideas, which would in time generate a commonwealth of culture. While the strength of earlier empires relied upon naval supremacy, commercial monopolies, and military interventions, the major export ‘material’ the US could offer for the improvement and dominance of Latin American societies and governments was expert knowledge. Thus, it was up to the scholarly community and the intellectuals in the United States to create long-lasting links across both cultures. And it was only US universities that could provide the intellectual energy that would result in genuine inter-American cooperation.

Wisconsin sociologist Edward Ross especially underlined the influence of South America’s university culture on the treatment of subalterns by its alumni. He declared that even in countries as economically advanced as Argentina, the intellectual class was an aristocracy, sharing, along with landowners, the same racial attitudes and disdain for manual labor. To change this, South American colleges and universities should establish debating societies, research graduate seminars, and strive for greater interaction between professors and students: in short, adopt US and European values. Only then would their elites be in a position to guide their nations to being democratic societies. Transplanted to a South American context, US progressive ideology became the crucible of difference: democratic government, social equality, and political modernity required institutions that only the United States, and a few other developed nations, possessed.

## Conclusions

The work of US scholars produced new, comprehensive panoramas as well as more synthesized and, at the same time, more fractured views of South America. This information promoted a reconceptualization of US foreign policy: ideas of cultural exchanges and intellectual cooperation, and arguments for the proper training of South American elites at US universities materialized out of this new academic-political consensus. Through the work of US experts in the social sciences and the humanities, US foreign-policy makers came to understand the vociferous criticism by Latin American intellectuals and statesmen of US interventions in the Caribbean. In this sense, scholars such as Clarence Haring brought back to US academic circles the anxieties of Latin American elites about Yankee imperialism and the purported technological superiority of US civilization. US scholars carried to South America an empiricist mandate: to observe and measure, to map and photograph, to identify the main problems and issues pertaining to the region’s present and future. Yet their experience of the realities of South America was mediated by multiple interactions with native informants – creoles, indi-

genous peoples, and foreign residents. Hiram Bingham listened to many rumors about hidden Inca ruins and interviewed many landlords, tenants, Indian peons, and district authorities before he reached the mountains of Machu Picchu. In this sense, he recovered dispersed local knowledges and put them at the disposal of a neo-imperial project of knowledge. Similarly, Leo Rowe drew on a discussion among Argentine constitutionalists about the centralist deviation of their federalist government and used it to more effectively apprehend the question of how adaptable the tenets of ‘American government’ might be to diverse Hispano-American contexts. Thus, local knowledges, readapted and reinterpreted, migrated north in order to contribute to the construction of a hegemonic, imperial vision of Latin America.

Traces of the native informants – particularly of indigenous peoples from the forests, deserts, and highlands of Peru – permeate the texts of Isiah Bowman’s books on the Andes. Bowman transcribed their complaints and lamentations (regarding the violence of rubber tappers, debt peonage on sugar plantations, harsh living conditions in the Puna, and their general fear of the white man), and all these local knowledges were synthesized into regional panoramas, in which socioeconomic backwardness and political underdevelopment were central. In order to rescue from the condescension of US academic culture the voices of native informants, and to interrogate their meaning, contemporary researchers have to examine the foreign-local interactions that produced new knowledge about South America. Bowman’s conception of ‘conditional conquest’ contained a warning against the continued incursion of foreign investment and technology in the Andes. This admonition, however, remained elusive to the US foreign-policy community. Bowman’s and Ross’s denouncement of premodern, feudal conditions in the Andean highlands also remained a dormant proposition, only awakened in the early 1940s, under the influence of Nelson A. Rockefeller concerns about poverty and underdevelopment, and still later when the Alliance for Progress was envisioned and implemented.<sup>16</sup>

In its attempt to build a more reliable system of inter-American cooperation, the Washington establishment added a cultural component to its traditional style of diplomacy, one that was predicated on the need for intensified intellectual cooperation and cultural exchange. Thus, by the late 1930s, the US State Department was deeply immersed in a quest for ‘Hispanic American culture’, a pursuit that was necessarily mediated by academic knowledge producers. The new activities of the State Department’s Division of Cultural Relations (established in 1938) revealed an increasing curiosity about South American popular music, folk traditions, ethnic minorities, aboriginal cultures, and languages that was unthinkable in, say, 1898 (see Sadlier 12–14). This transition, I argue, is related to the new understanding of South America brought about by the series of knowledge-gathering enterprises described in this article.

16 On Rockefeller’s developmentalist views, see: Colby, *Thy Will Be Done*; and Cramer and Prutsch, *Americas Unidas*.

As a result, in the 1930s and 1940s, research of regional knowledge originally propelled and financed by US universities became increasingly intertwined with US foreign policy. The dissemination and promotion of Pan-American ideals were part and parcel of the quotidian work of US professors in the multiplying courses on Latin America offered by departments of history, geography, political science, Spanish language, anthropology, etc. In short, disciplinary regional knowledge became an important source of support for the expansion of US economic assistance and cultural influence in South America. During WWII the United States could confidently rely on its scholarly community to attempt to recruit Latin American countries for the side of the Allies. While South America as a whole responded coldly to this hail (Brazil being the only country that actively contributed to the war effort), WWII nevertheless revealed the existence of a vast apparatus of knowledge at the service of US hegemony.

The idea of a ‘benevolent empire’, organized around intellectual cooperation and cultural exchanges was conceived in the earlier twentieth century and realized in the decades that followed. The flow of commodities, investments, and technologies articulated the relations between northern and southern economic agents, establishing a division of labor between manufacturing and raw materials that became difficult to redirect. Much of the ‘American way of life’ penetrated the social and cultural life of the emerging middle classes in South America. But Edward Ross’s cautionings withstood the passage of time: the Andean peasantry received few benefits from the contact with US modernity. The tyranny of distance to the national centers and enduring poverty made it impossible for these populations to purchase US mass-produced goods.

Whether these knowledge enterprises – and their quest for encountering and making productive Fugitive Knowledges – are of a persistent or ephemeral nature cannot be fully examined in this brief investigation. Their protagonists, at least, generally profited from these endeavors: The discovery of Machu Picchu made Bingham a celebrity in the field of international archaeology. After 1915 he abandoned field research in Peru and devoted himself to other notable activities: pioneer aviator in WWI, and then successful politician in the Republican party. Bowman’s trailblazing geographic work in the Andes was instrumental in his securing the directorship of the American Geographical Society, which enabled him to complete the grand enterprise of mapping all of Hispanic America at a scale of 1:1 million. Later, he advised President Woodrow Wilson in the Versailles negotiations and then acted as President Franklin D. Roosevelt’s science advisor.

Leo Rowe’s contacts in South America, particularly his experience in Argentina, Chile, and Brazil, promoted him to the position of director of the Pan-American Union, the Washington-based institution that dealt with Latin American affairs prior to the founding of the Organization of American States. His prestige as a statesman perhaps overshadowed his scholarly work; his contributions to the understanding of politics and government in the region did not garner him

the credit he deserved and were almost ignored by the political scientists who followed in his wake.

The same fate befell Edward Ross. Having been instrumental in the establishment of sociology as a discipline in the United States, he continued to influence generations of students. But it is likely that his critique of the premodern sociability of Andean societies remained quiescent in his sociology textbooks, resurfacing only much later when a new paradigm (functionalist-structuralist sociology allied with modernization theory) once again activated these early discoveries about indigenous societies that still shouldered the burden of the Spanish colonial legacy, and continued to live under social conditions reminiscent of medieval Europe. Yet with time, US sociologists forgot Ross's contributions to the understanding of South American societies.

The biographies of these five scholars illustrate the close entanglement between research activities and the socio-political demands of the US nation state. With the establishment of academic disciplines, Latin America was made 'visible' according to the panoptical terms of engagement of the US, and this process in turn marginalized diverse sets of indigenous knowledges – an epistemological fugitivity easy to acknowledge, but still difficult to overcome.

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## EPILOGUE

# Missing Archives, Oppositional Recoveries

ALI BEHDAD

During one of my research trips to Iran, my mother, who had been following my research interest in ‘old’ photographs of Iran with skeptical curiosity, gave me several boxes of dry gelatin glass plates and a few original prints dating back to the early twentieth century. The plates and the photographs, which she had kept in an old chest in our basement since her family’s home in the city of Sabzevar had been demolished to build a new apartment building, belonged to my grandfather. She told me that he was one of the first people in Sabzevar to take amateur photographs of his family and friends. Although I knew my grandfather was a *Motajaded*, a forward-looking and progressive man, I was never told by anyone in my family that he dabbled in photography when he was younger; nor did I know much about the early appearance of amateur photography in small Iranian provincial towns until then. My mother later shared with me that my grandfather, who learned photography from a teacher from Azerbaijan, had taken many photographs of my grandmother, a highly religious woman, without the *hejab*, but somehow the family had no traces of these images, even though my mother was certain that they had at one time existed. One photograph my mother clearly remembered showed my grandmother posing next to a painted cutout of a car pretending to drive a car. After an artist friend developed positive prints from the glass plates when I returned to the United States, I was struck by the absence of my grandmother and, indeed, of any female family member in my grandfather’s collection. All the photographs featured my grandfather himself or other male family members and friends, many of whom nobody in my family could identify. It seemed, then, that a concerted effort had been made to remove all images of women from the family archive. For not only there were no traces of photographs of my grandmother, but a plate in which she may have appeared next to her children had been scratched to exclude her.



Fig. 1: Mahmoud Oskoui, family photograph, ca. 1910s. Author's Collection.

I begin the epilogue with this personal anecdote about my grandfather's missing photographic archive because it provides a representative example of the volume's central theme and critical interventions made by the contributors, namely the theme of archival loss and the oppositional project of recovering fugitive knowledge. As the case of my grandfather's photographs demonstrates, archives in contexts marked by uneven relations of power are often marginalized, lost, or destroyed. And yet whenever and wherever they are recuperated or their loss and destruction acknowledged, they often yield a great deal of knowledge about uneven cultural encounters. More precisely, while providing glimpses into the subjectivities of those written out of dominant histories, they may document further acts of effacement once they are recovered.<sup>1</sup>

In the case of my grandfather's missing photographs, for example, the absence and erasure of women in images in which men prominently represented themselves speaks volumes about the unequal patriarchal relations of power that marginalized and excluded women not only from the domain of representation but

1 It is not altogether clear *who* erased my grandmother from the glass plates. The images I have provided are made from my grandfather's original dry gelatin glass plates, but it is not known who scratched out the plate. Most likely my grandfather did so himself, and possibly even at the request of my grandmother, but I have no evidence for this. There is an uncertainty of historical agency and a shared responsibility for the leaks in the colonial archive – motivational, technological, and other – that are themselves worthy of further critical investigation. This also includes a frequently observed 'voluntary' complicity on the part of the subjugated with oppressive structures.

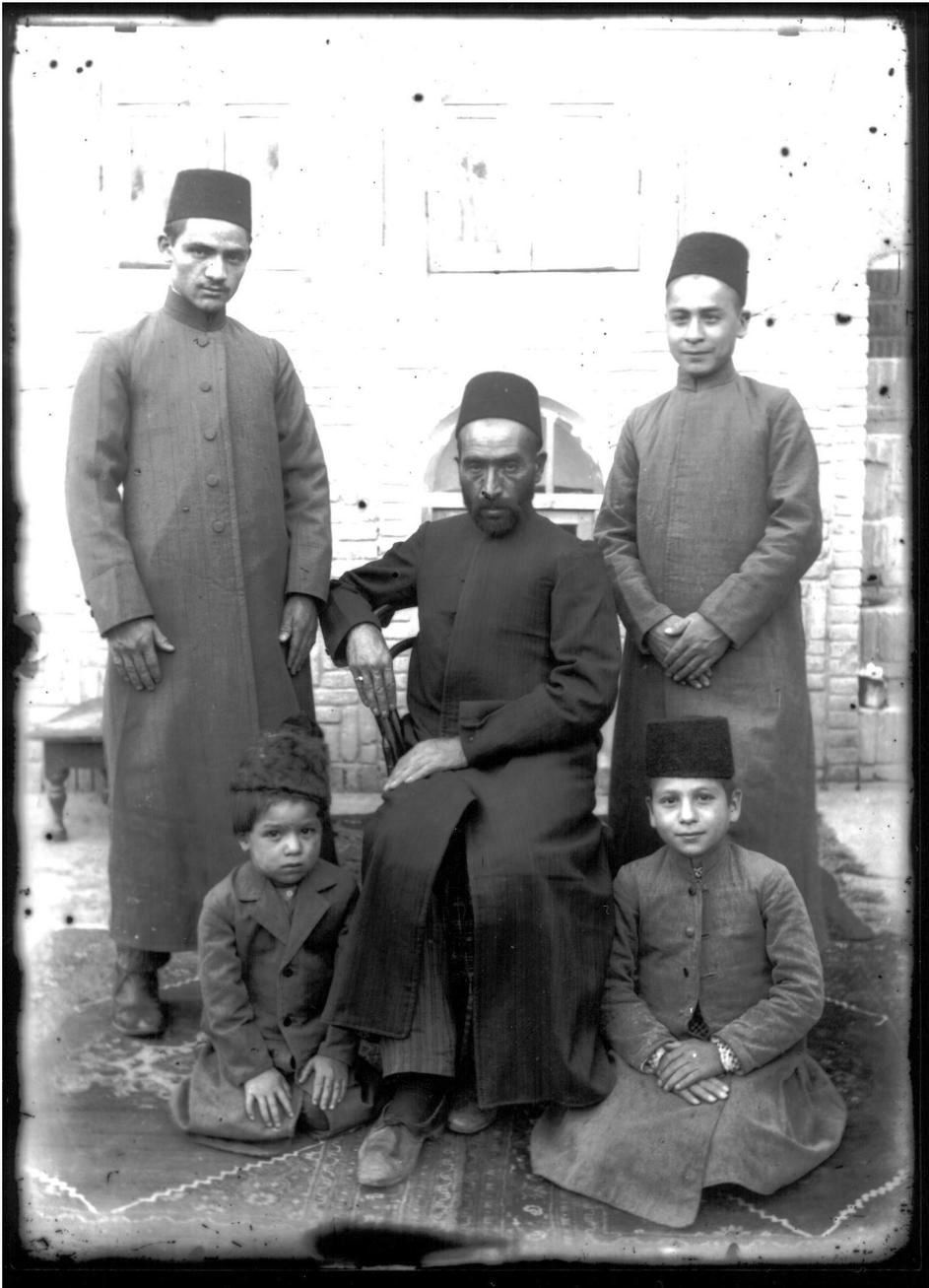


Fig. 2: Mahmoud Oskoui, family photograph, ca. 1910s. Author's Collection.

also from positions of power. While my grandfather and other male family members projected a notion of modern subjectivity onto their own photographic portraits and other family photos by dressing in European dresses and awkwardly displaying ‘modern’ objects such as clocks, binoculars, and European furniture in the photographs, they nonetheless espoused traditional values as fathers, husbands, brothers, and patriarchs in relations to their wives, mothers, and daughters. In all of my grandfather’s photographs, for example, male patriarchs of the family are symbolically positioned in the center, often seated on a chair to highlight their privileged, patriarchal role as the head of the household. Next to them are the oldest sons to mark their secondary position in the family hierarchy.

The stark absence of mothers, daughters, and wives in these photographs further underscores their marginalized roles within the family structure, an absence that also speaks to a patriarchal notion of male honor that prevents the public exposure of respectable and virtuous women. These recovered images and their exclusionary mode of representation allow us to imagine and articulate what has been erased, namely the presences and voices of the women of the family.

The essays in this volume similarly recover archival materials that have been ignored, marginalized, lost, or even destroyed to reflect on the mechanisms of erasure and implications of recovery. In some cases, the perspectives and voices of the dominated groups are simply sidelined, such as those of Native Americans in the United States or the Sami people in Sweden, and in such cases, it is important to mine the texts of the colonizers for “shards” of indigenous knowledge, as Gunlög Fur demonstrates in her essay. Fur and others in this volume remind us that an oppositional historiography demands that we become careful readers of the colonial archive to recuperate the voices that have been marginalized in them. In other cases, it is necessary to read the colonial discourses of the past contrapuntally against modern archaeological and anthropological discoveries, as Neil Safier attempts in the context of communities in the Amazon River. Another example of such interdisciplinary juxtaposition to recover marginalized knowledge is Ricardo Salvatore’s discussion of the historically and politically problematic entanglement of Latin American Area Studies and the US imperial policy in the region. Still in other cases, it is crucial to address the disavowed histories of colonialism as Daniel Walther suggests. In his essay in this volume, he offers a postcolonial reading of German’s negated history of German colonialism in Southwest Africa. In some cases, there are oppositional voices that have been relegated to oblivion, and the task of the postcolonial critic is to rescue them from obscurity as Ryan Kashanipour attempts in his essay by recovering the works of a Spanish friar, Manuel de Rivas, whose critique of Spanish colonial policies entailed a profound understanding of Mayan cosmology.

As these examples suggest, the critical projects in this volume belong to an oppositional consciousness in that they read the absences and silences against the grain. They are on the side of memory, of remembering through archival recovery in order to free voices and perspectives which have been historically dis-

avowed or repressed by hegemonic and oppressive structures of power. They are what one may call the belated return of the epistemologically repressed, disrupting the structures of colonial amnesia that denied the oppressed their history. To the extent to which their counter-discursive nature is a function of their *anamnesia*<sup>2</sup> and of a historical consciousness that recuperates marginalized and silenced voices from the past, the essays in this volume are able to expose the genealogy of the oppressed and the veiled political economy of oppressive regimes of power. As such, these essays engage in a kind of interventionary critique that the late Edward Said championed, for they self-consciously situate themselves as vulnerable conjunctural nodes of ongoing disciplinary discourses where each of them posits nothing less than new objects of knowledge, new praxes of humanist activity, new theoretical models that upset or, at the very least, radically alter the prevailing paradigmatic norms (Said, “Orientalism Reconsidered” 212–13).

Moreover, the political and discursive interventionary nature of these critical practices is also a function of their interdisciplinarity. The counter-hegemonic and contestatory nature of their projects makes them defy the boundaries of the disciplinary impulse that tries to name and compartmentalize critical thinking. The problematics and politics of *anamnesia* to which the essays in this volume attend demand a counter-disciplinary mode of knowledge to rethink the relations and distinctions between history and culture, theory and praxis. As oppositional practices, these essays attempt to map the ways in which different modes of knowledge intersect and aim to create new epistemological paradigms to study cultural, historical, political, and social predicaments that undergird dominant forms of knowledge production.

Edward Said often took to task what he termed “the cult of expertise” (*Humanism* 121–23) in the American academy by which he meant narrow and myopic forms of specializations that enable the separation of academic and public domains. Instead of narrow specialization, he called for a “decentered consciousness” to help critics avoid working on behalf of one disciplinary audience, and attend to a “plurality of audiences and constituencies” (“Orientalism Reconsidered” 214). Working out of a decentered consciousness does not make these oppositional practices any less reflexive, but instead enables them to engage in an “anti-totalizing and anti-systematic” mode of historical critique. The essays in this volume work to address a plurality of interests and audiences as they link various discursive sites to unpack the complex ways in which hegemonic forms of knowledge often keep invisible the unequal relations of power that are worked through their strategies of differentiation, separation, and denial.

In her seminal book *Imperial Eyes*, Mary Louise Pratt coined the term “contact zone” by which she meant “social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of

2 By *anamnesia*, I mean an oppositional form of remembering that exposes the complex ways in which colonial and other dominant modes of power either overlook, disavow, or simply repress histories of violence and local knowledge.

domination and subordination” (4). She went on to elaborate strategies to read the colonial text in ways that make readable the voices of the colonized, and in order to enable us to reckon with the “overdetermined history of imperial meaning-making” (4). Building on Edward Said’s *Orientalism*, Pratt argued that far from being victims lacking proper agency, the colonized and indigenous communities in contact zones often resisted colonial ideology by appropriating metropolitan modes of representation in the periphery. Following Pratt’s critical intervention in the field of postcolonial studies, the essays in this volume have adopted her conceptual framework to argue that the colonial encounter between the ‘west’ and the ‘rest’ was marked by a “spatial and temporal copresence of subjects” and comprised of “interactive” and “improvisational dimensions,” to use Pratt’s own characterizations. The notion of “contact zone” and the idea of “transculturation” as a phenomenon of contact have been adopted here, on the one hand, to problematize the unidirectional relations of power between European colonizers and the non-European colonized, and, on the other hand, to account for the subjectivity and resistance of the non-European colonized and their textual artifacts. These readings of absences and erasures of colonial archives engage in a belated politics of remembering that aims to produce new histories of resistance through articulating the voices and imagine the presences of those left silenced in the conquerors’ histories.

Such belated recoveries of the traces of the marginalized and the oppressed other in colonial archives would be politically problematic, if not utterly ineffective, without a committed and sustained engagement with the politics of contemporaneity. In making this claim, I wish to make two interrelated arguments by way of broadening the implications of what is termed “fugitive knowledge” here. First, for these belated engagements with colonial archives to be politically effective, they must not only maintain a coeval recognition of their own historicity, their own “worldliness,” as well as the academic contexts in which they are inscribed, but also make use of such historical consciousness to critique the cultural conditions and political exigencies that continue to produce unequal relations of power today. As Edward Said cogently argued, “our point [...] cannot be simply and obdurately to reaffirm the paramount importance of formerly suppressed or silenced forms of knowledge and leave it at that, nor can it be to surround ourselves with the sanctimonious piety of historical or cultural victimhood as a way of making our intellectual presence felt” (“Politics” 26). While a critical focus on the colonial past is salutary for producing the marginalized voices or absent texts of the colonized, such engagements with the colonial history have to theorize the historical junctures that make such fugitive knowledge relevant to the neo-imperial relations of power today. Even more importantly, it is crucial to not become forgetful of the neo-imperial context in which much of postcolonial critique is produced and received.

Second, though most postcolonial critics inhabit the privileged spaces of Euro-American academy, it is crucial to continually articulate new tactics of

opposition, tactics that would take advantage of the loopholes in these spaces to subvert oppressive strategies masked by the benevolent claims of pluralism, multiculturalism, and cosmopolitanism. In this regard, Gayatri Spivak's "practical politics of the open end" (*Critic* 105) can be of great use to critics who excavate fugitive forms of knowledge. Spivak uses the analogy of cleaning teeth to describe the need for a continual maintenance of opposition, one in which the critic is neither pessimistic about "fighting a losing battle against mortality" nor idealistic about the outcome of these activities (105). Interventionary and oppositional stances such as the ones presented in this volume ought to view their projects as interminable reckonings with unequal relations of power as they reconsider and refine their critical tactics, while remaining vigilant to the conjunctural position of their discursive practices.

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