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... porque en recontar cosas modernas hay peligro de hacer graues ofensas.

Agustín de Zárate, "Epistola dedicatoria," *Historia del descubrimiento y conquista del Perú*, p. iii (overleaf)

Modern people living in state-level societies usually think that hierarchy is normal and that superordination and subordination are natural or universal.

Bruhns and Stothert, *Women in Ancient America*, 214

All the territorial possessions of all the political establishments in the earth—including America, of course—consist of pilferings from other people's wash. No tribe howsoever insignificant and no nation howsoever mighty, occupies a foot of land not stolen. When the English, the French, and the Spaniards reached America, the Indian tribes had been raiding each other's territorial clotheslines for ages and every acre of ground in the continent had been stolen and restolen five hundred times.

Mark Twain, *Following the Equator*, 1:298–99
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This book is about the formation of nations in Latin America before the arrival of the Spanish and how those entities changed after contact with them. What I have tried to do is start the story from the perspective of Amerindian cultures, not from the Spanish perspective, the usual point of departure. As is well known, victors in wars are given the power to rewrite history. Beyond that, victors can write about the people they have defeated and subjugated in a way that suits their own purposes. It took me a long time to find the way to invert this paradigm, but the seeds were sown during my years as a graduate student at the University of Connecticut.

After arriving in Mexico City in the mid-1980s to bury myself in the reading list for my PhD comprehensive exams (it seemed a good place), I discovered Miguel León Portilla's *Visión de los vencidos* (*Broken Spears*). This anthology was not something I had ever read for class. So I plunged into it, and from it, I began to develop an awareness of non-European chroniclers who had a story to tell different from the one proffered in the canonical writings. Later, in the midst of Quincentenary celebrations and protestations,
I began teaching courses at what was then Loyola College. These offerings included both European and indigenous or mestizo chroniclers. The first course, "Mexican Civilization," suggested by my then department chair, Gisèle Child-Olmsted, surveyed thirty centuries of cultural achievement. Another, "Mexican Chronicles," explored historical episodes such as the massacre in Cholula's Atrium of God from a variety of perspectives, including those offered by Hernán Cortés, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Bartolomé de las Casas, Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl and Diego Muñoz Camargo. Those early courses made me aware that whereas the impact of the Renaissance on the first hundred years of the colonial era was substantial, it did not eclipse Amerindian knowledge, despite trying to do so. I am grateful to Miguel León Portilla not only for publishing his eye-opening anthology but also for publishing an early segment of my research on Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, Muñoz Camargo and Sahagún in *Estudios de Cultura Náhuatl* in 2001. Another, appearing in the journal MLN, eventually won the Mid-Atlantic Council for Latin American Studies' Harold Eugene Davis Prize for the "best article" in the year 2002. Those articles mark the early origins of this book and are built upon in varying degrees in several of the Mexican segments of this book.

From this teaching and research, I stumbled across an important truth: that there were contrasting viewpoints regarding what is generally called the Conquest. I came to realize that the events themselves, with their inevitable military analysis, might be important for history but were not as interesting as the cultural configurations they glossed over. Because of the biases inherent in the chronicle, I turned to other kinds of sources: readings in ethnohistory, archeology, and anthropology helped me gain a fuller picture of several precontact cultures. A yearlong series of visits to the Library of Congress in 2006 allowed me to spend considerable time with the documents of the Jay I. Kislak Collection as well as rare correspondence in the Special Collections reading room. The collection director and curator, Arthur Dunkelman, was most helpful in making Nahua maps, letters handwritten by Las Casas, and a wealth of other manuscripts and rare books available to me. The librarians in the Hispanic Reading room opened up their microfilm library to me. The next summer, a Title VI Summer Research Fellowship sponsored by the UNC-Duke Consortium on Latin American Studies revealed new kinds of sources to me. At the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, the Bernard J. Flatow Collection of sixteenth and seventeenth-century first editions (see Ilgen) allowed me hands-on access. I am grateful to the knowledgeable Teresa Chapa for orienting me to materials at the UNC library. The Odriozola Peruvian Collection at Duke University contained correspondence between individuals as well as contemporary legislation that added to my understanding of how colonialism operated. Duke's Special Collections librarians were of great support.

Numerous people have helped me along the way with this project. I would like to mention Luis B. Eyzaguirre, may he rest in peace, who taught an interesting graduate seminar that placed the chronicles in the same context of some of the great Humanist masters and piqued my curiosity about the sixteenth century. My gratitude goes to Joseph Wieczorek, Virginia Marino, Howard Giskin, Jesús Díaz Caballero, Wilfredo Kapsoli Escudero, and Colleen Hatcher for helpful early commentary. Later discussions I had with Raquel Chang Rodríguez, Sara Castro-Klarén, Christian Fernández, and others helped me hone the idea of the nation I was working with and also alerted me to works that might have remained off my radar. Sara, in particular, helped me to understand the importance of theory in understanding colonial realities. I am in debt to colleagues in the Department of Modern Languages at Loyola.

Already mentioned is Gisèle Child-Olmsted. Leslie Zarker Morgan read several sections and Randall Donaldson and Sharon Diane Nell proofread a proposal that eventually led to the Title VI Summer Fellowship, as well as two summer grants and two sabbaticals. The grants were awarded by the Research and Sabbatical Committee and the Grants Office at Loyola University in 2005 and 2007. The sabbatical in 2006 facilitated my completing the bulk of the research for this project, and another in 2013 allowed me to complete Chapters 4 and 5, embark on a massive endeavor of organization, and polish the final version of the manuscript. I would especially like to thank Nancy Dufau and Stacy Bass from Loyola's Grants Office for their professional help in the process. Loyola's Center for the Humanities aided me with funding for a research assistant various semesters and a summer. The grantees, Hannah O'Neill (spring 2006), Brianna Kosteca (spring 2007), and Renata Titus-Aguilera (summer and fall 2008) were without par in finding and scanning documents, photocopying, transcribing, and editing. The Center for the Humanities also most graciously helped with funds to cover mapmaking and indexing costs. Thanks also go to Mary Beverungen, Cindy McCabe, Peggy Field, Ginny Harper, Nicholas Triggs, and Christy Dentler of Interlibrary Loan Services at the Loyola/Notre Dame Library in the great city of Baltimore for their conscientious help in locating historical materials and secondary sources.
I am grateful to Joseph Tulchin, who brought me into the project to publish a second edition of the Encyclopedia of Latin American History and Culture (2008), and to Erick Langer and Jay Kinsbrunner, may he rest in peace, who both kept me busy with my editing responsibilities. My work for the Encyclopedia made me think about periods and places in Latin America I might not normally have considered. Mapmaker Erin Greb in New York City made five of the most wonderful maps for me. Finally, the anonymous readers for the University of Oklahoma Press have provided a wealth of feedback to keep me from my foibles and to get me to make certain points with greater clarity. I am grateful to them for the detailed work they did. I am in awe of the editors and proofreaders at the University of Oklahoma Press, Alessandra Tamulevich, Steven Baker, and Maura McAndrew, who all had patience with me and faith in my manuscript. It goes without saying, however, that any errors I have made are my own.

ABBREVIATIONS FOR SOURCES

For full bibliographic information for published works, see the bibliography.

AZ The Aztecs under Spanish Rule, by Gibson
CP-1 Crónica del Perú: primera parte, by Cieza de León
CP-3 Crónica del Perú: tercera parte, by Cieza de León
CDR Cartas de relación, by Cortés, 1983 edition by Alcalá
CR Comentarios Reales, by Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, 1943 edition by Rosenblat
G/FDC General History, by Sahagún (The Florentine Codex)
HG Historia general, by Sahagún
HI Historia de los indios de la Nueva España, by Motolinía
HV Historia verdadera de la conquista de la nueva España, by Díaz del Castillo, 1982 edition by Sáenz de Santa María
HT Historia de Tlaxcala, by Muñoz Camargo, 1986 edition by Vázquez
HDC Historia del descubrimiento y conquista del Peru, by Zárate, first edition
NAC  The Nahuas after the Conquest, by Lockhart
NS  Nahuas and Spaniards, by Lockhart
NU  Nacimiento de una utopía, by Burga
OC  Obras completas, by Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz
OH  Obras históricas, by Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, 1997 edition by O’Gorman
PNC  Primer nueva crónica y buen gobierno, by Guamán Poma de Ayala
PV  Popol Vuh, part and chapter numbers refer to divisions in the Recinos and the Goetz/Morley editions
TD  Textos y documentos, by Colón
TR  Tratados, by Las Casas
TSC  Tlaxcala in the Sixteenth Century, by Gibson
YE  Yale Edition of the Complete Works of More
This book on the formation of Latin American nations is the second volume of what is becoming a trilogy that seeks to decolonize our research methodologies with respect to Amerindian cultures in the Americas. While the first book, *Decolonizing Indigeneity*, establishes four possible approaches to decolonial interpretation, the second, *The Formation of Latin American Nations*, puts in practice those approaches as it traces the contours of cultural components of several indigenous nations of late antiquity and their dispersal into early modernity, when transatlantic colonialism was instituted up and down the Atlantic coast and parts of the Pacific coast. Before getting to that, it must be stated that these two terms, “late antiquity” and “early modernity,” are from our time and are not the ones used by the people who lived in those two periods and those diverse places. Given the diversity of cultural trajectories and the multiplicity of perspectives that bring them into focus, no perfect terminology exists, nor is there a consistent system of periodization applicable uniformly to all areas. The cultures of late antiquity flowed in their own ways, sometimes in isolation, often not, and not always in the same direction.
Generally, though, in archaeological terms, Mesoamerican cultures flowed from Paleolithic through the Preclassic or Formative, through the Classic, and into the Late Classic, this last being the Mexica (Aztec) period and the interval in which the K'iche' nation coalesced from its Mayan roots. Andean cultures flowed from the pre-ceramic stage through the Early, Middle, and Late horizons, this last being the Inka age. Without distorting these cultures, the general and nonculturually specific rubric of "antiquity" encompasses all these periods and places in the Americas. This was the general sense applied to the term in Hewett's 1936 Ancient Life in Mexico and Central America and in Lumbreras's The Peoples and Cultures of Ancient Peru (1974; originally published in 1969 as De los pueblos, las culturas y las artes del antiguo Perú). North, Central, and South America were all brought under this rubric in Kubler's 1962 The Art and Architecture of Ancient America: The Mexican, Maya, and Andean Peoples. We say "antiquity" as it encapsulates all these pre-contact cultures over eons in these diverse regions, but when we say "late antiquity," we focus on the last centuries (Late Classic Mesoamerica and Late Horizon Peru) before the seismic shift that occurred after 1492.

The same can be said about the expression "early modern." It is a somewhat imprecise expression referring to Europe and thus creating an oxymoron, as suggested by Euan Cameron, referring to the period beginning after the waning of the Middle Ages (marked as ending at different times in the various European countries) and expiring as the nineteenth century began. It can be as imprecise and variegated as expressed in different languages and referring to different countries as are the equally imprecise terms Renaissance (it begins in Italy and ends elsewhere) and Siglo de Oro (actually two centuries in Spain). Referring to Spain, James Casey explains, "The early modern period lacks, almost by definition, the clear features of its predecessor and successor, the medieval and modern worlds." In other words, it was a time of change. Despite the imprecision of the designation, the period has certain distinguishing features, one of which is indispensable to deciphering its mysteries. Casey clarifies: "One of the characteristics of the early modern world was the acceleration of that process conveniently if loosely described as the transition from feudalism to capitalism." But this was not necessarily the case with Latin America, where feudal or feudal-like institutions such as chattel slavery survived into the nineteenth century and debt peonage still exists today. Nevertheless, as discussed in chapter 5, obrajes (wool mills), natural resource mining, agricultural production, and mercantilist trade were all in play during the sixteenth century. While "early modern" can have an economic meaning (Prak, Early Modern Capitalism), it can also have religious meaning (Miola, Early Modern Catholicism), historical meaning (Herzog, Defining Nations Immigrants and Citizens in Early Modern Spain and Spanish America), and cultural meaning, with which I employ it here. For Latin America, the term "early modern" can be roughly synonymous with the colonial era, but looks at other aspects of society not always conjured in the word "colonial." In some cases, it may be more precise to talk about early modern enclaves, as the Conquest was uneven and still continuing against the Ranqueles, for example, during the nineteenth century, and against the K'iche' during the twentieth.

It may surprise the reader to see the term "nation" so widely applied to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century politico-cultural organization. It is used here in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Spanish language sense, which as will be discussed, is quite different from the modern and postmodern usage. The nation during its passage from late antiquity to early modern, as defined by a variety of sources, consists of a septet of defining determinants including ethnicity and ethnic diffusion, lineage as it pertains to class, memory/history, religion, language, gender, and the human migration and/or long-distance trade resulting in cultural interaction. Each of these factors, to varying degrees, informs the pre- and early modern container we call "the nation." The nation, understood here as a group of peoples with a real or ideal common origin with a shared belief system, was not a static arrangement, and frequently entered into a process we can describe as ethnic blending, or forming new hybrid configurations. When referring to Amerindian societies the word "nation" has been used interchangeably with the words "tribe," "pueblo," or people. In sixteenth-century Spanish, tribu (tribe) was not generally used. In the 1739 Diccionario de la lengua castellana, the term refers to Israeli and Arab divisions of peoples but not to Amerindians. The words "nations," "pueblos," and others were common signifiers in sixteenth-century Spanish prose, and the semiotic differences between them constitutes one line of inquiry in this book. In essence, we will look at several Amerindian peoples and the elements that gave form to their nations so that we can then map out how Spaniards appropriated or rejected them after the post-1492 invasions. Chapter 1 sets the stage for the book and paints some broad strokes about sixteenth century conceptualizations of the nation based on ethnicity, culture, migrations, borders, and trade, and
how some twentieth-or twenty-first century conceptualizations reject those elements as constituting nationness, in some cases denying their importance in the configuration of the nation.

For both late-antiquity and early modern peoples, ethnicity was perhaps an obvious means for delimiting nations, although that is not a category and term peoples from either period would have used in describing themselves. Chapters 2 and 3 make manifest the pre-Hispanic origins of the ethnic nation, simply called nación in the Spanish of the time, by taking into account language, religion, lineage, and cultural diffusion and then how the facets of ethnicity were modified, reoriented, and projected during the first century of transatlantic colonialism. Specifically, chapter 2 focuses on the Mesoamerican chronicles, understanding this term broadly, with special emphasis on those by Hernán Cortés, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, Bernardino de Sahagún, Diego Muñoz Camargo, Fernando de Alva Ixtlilxóchitl, and the Popol Wuj to extrapolate the time before contact with Spaniards and then document the changes after that juncture. Maps and recent anthropological and archeological investigation fill in significant gaps. Special attention will be given to lineage, the Nahua social-organization structure known as altepetl (pl. altepemec), and the triple ideals of Toltecayotl, or Toltecness; Hispanidad, or Hispanicness; and something we might call Chichimecayotl, or Chichimecness, a contested category in a multilayered cultural borderlands.

Chapter 3 deals with colonial writings on the Andes, including primarily Agustín de Zárate, Pedro Cieza de León, Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, Blas Valera, and Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala. After setting out the issues regarding the nations of late-antiquity Colombia, this chapter will turn to the central Andes to discuss the millenarian social structures known as ayllu and panaka as root organizations even when contested or ignored in the face of colonial bias. Special attention will then be dedicated to a particular language, Qheswa, and a people who called themselves “Qheswa” but who, paradoxically, were not Inkakuna (sing. Inka), the supreme rulers who diffused the Qheswa language through the mountains as a cultural and linguistic ideal similar to Toltecayotl. Unlike the Mesoamerican case of Toltecayotl, however, the Andean ideal did not have a recognizable name, although it was associated with Qheswa, known as the “General Language.”

The subordination of women has persisted throughout the ages, and asymmetrical relationships between women and men can play a role when distinct groups come together. Chapter 4 searches for pre-Hispanic patterns of gender relationships, both intra- and interethnic, and determines how those patterns affected the inchoate transatlantic society that formed as Amerindian women were “encountered” by Spanish men. Postcontact women took on various roles ranging from elite actors to agents of their own destinies to intercultural conduits of power to be exchanged, as well as victims of rape and of slavery. On a basic level, the child-bearing relationship between a man and a woman formed the kernel of the nation-unit no matter what the particular group called it, and when said man and woman were from different nation-units, the nature of their respective nations was modified. Many of the sources employed in chapters 2 and 3 also furnish evidence for this chapter.

The sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are pivotal for these processes and configurations as they integrated into what Immanuel Wallerstein and his successors call the World-System. As this system coalesced, it brought into the European economic and cultural fold smaller networks that were thriving in the Western Hemisphere before 1492. Interaction with the master system allowed diverse peoples to come together directly or indirectly under new, more sophisticated, and more profound hierarchical modes of organization. Besides human migration, chapter 5 looks at cross-cultural trade’s impact on the nation. This trade could take form from the exchange of icons for religious reasons, or the commoditization of those same artifacts in an expanding long-distance circuit. Whereas much inquiry on these matters has focused on the expansion of the European circuit, we will look at a variety of sources that reveal expansive trading networks in the Americas predating the so-called Conquest before looking at their incorporation into the transatlantic circuit.

Why should we care about the moment when early modernity begins to flow into and reorganize late antiquity? The answer to this question has to do with a past that can be instructive to the present. As Papadopoulos and Urton write in the introduction to their edited volume on value in the ancient world, “The study of the past is more than just the study of ancient people, artifacts, events, and processes. At a broader, behavioral level, it is more about the relationship between people, material objects, processes, and space or place.” It is this relationship between people and their communities, the relationships communities have with each other, and the objects and trade routes that bind them together that help to forge culture. Those relationships suffered an unexpected turning point when Europeans came to the Indies with their products and products from the Indies flowed back to Europe, forever changing both hemispheres. Yet there were constants between late antiquity and early modernity, as there
are between those eras and our current one. There was urban planning in late antiquity as there was in early modernity, and of course, there still is in our time. Likewise, there were wars in late antiquity—the arrival of the Europeans was defined by war—and we continue to have wars. There was trade then as now, and there were nations then as now, even if the nuances of this term’s meaning have changed over the centuries. Because aspects of the human condition are eternal, we can learn more about ourselves from those cultures and communities from so long ago.

The early modern juncture is pivotal in the reorganization of the world because it incubates the origins of a capitalist world economic order and the establishment of an Ecumenical Christian Republic, both of which glossed over millenary ethnonational identities palpitating just below the surface. Besides the reach of Western Civilization, generally considered a positive phase in history, there is a “darker side of the Renaissance,” to use Walter Mignolo’s phrase, which subordinated peoples while integrating them into the Atlantic system. The silhouette of nations obscured on the “darker side” are illuminated and revealed with interdisciplinary readings of Nahuatl, K’iche’, Qheswa, and Spanish-language documentation enriching our understanding of the event that Spaniards called (and school textbooks still call), the Conquest.

Such awareness deepens our appreciation of the Americas in three ways. First, it sheds light on society and its institutions during the first century of the colonial interval. This is because previous investigation was based first on the chronicles, then on Qheswa-language texts translated during the 1960s, and then on Nahuatl texts that surfaced in the 1970s, together with those that resulted from the cracking of the Mayan code in the latter half of the twentieth century. We will attempt to collapse these erstwhile trends into one heterophilological quilt of comprehension, defining Hispanic and diverse indigenous worldviews during the colonial interval. Second, as we dig deeper into colonial-era reality to unveil the latent condition of coloniality that would later limit the nation’s relationship to “Independence,” we expand our grasp of how colonialism lurks behind the advances of what is commonly described as Western Civilization. One of the ingredients of coloniality, a condition studied by Aníbal Quijano, is hegemony: when people who are subordinated accept, even to a degree, their subordination. Inasmuch as nations must interact with other nations, both within one state apparatus and between states as part of the evolving World-System, hegemony is formed and they cannot be considered totally free. Third, five centuries of suppressing national attributes limits our ability to unearth in unfiltered fashion the raw data necessary for defining the identities of peoples organized as recognized and unrecognized nations. Indigenous and mestizo authors’ works were given form by enduring altepetl cultures in Mexico and persevering panaka (pl. panakakuna) or ayllu (pl. ayllukuna) relationships in Peru, realities only recently coming to light. An example from each exemplifies these continuities.

Regarding the former, Jongsoo Lee notes differences of perspective regarding the fifteenth-century Acolhua (pl. Acolhuaque) leader Nezahualcoyotl that exist between Acolhua and Mexicatl sources.14 This divergence causes Lee to look with suspicion at Acolhua sources that favor Nezahualcoyotl’s own standpoint. Regarding the latter, José Antonio Mazzotti stresses that Inca Garcilaso de la Vega was from the Qhapaq Ayllu panaka, one branch of the royal family. This panaka-centric optic caused several prominent social scientists and historians (think González de la Rosa and Rostworowski) to look at Garcilaso as a suspicious historiographical source for Inka history.15 The persistent loyalty to the altepetl, ayllu, or other configuration giving form to the stories recorded by mestizo and Amerindian authors must be taken into account, even when writing in Spanish. Besides community standards, as Stephanie Merrim thoughtfully observes, a chronicle’s author injected his own worldview into it, "endowing it with an autobiographical dimension."16 Moreover, Rolena Adorno discovers political and financial dimensions, for example, in Díaz del Castillo’s Historia verdadera de la conquista de la Nueva España resulting from his engagement with Bartolomé de las Casas.17 Certainly all chroniclers had some type of bias, ranging from the kind of memory that results from personal experience to attentiveness to ethnic nation, justifying encomienda holdings, and rationalizing the “Conquest" itself. However, if one identifies the bias, one can read between the lines.

Bias and numerous other factors resulting from reading pre-Hispanic communities through the filter of colonialism create, Rocío Cortés reminds us, a real challenge in interpreting the meaning of the norms of those communities.18 She recognizes, for example, that texts authored during the colonial era (she mentions the Crónica mexicana by Hernando de Alvarado Tezozómoc and the Historia de las Indias de Nueva España by Diego Durán) can simultaneously “reveal” and “conceal” as they narrate events from long ago.19 Beyond individual authors and informants, auspiciously, a plethora of other kinds of sources help us to read between the lines, so to speak. Legal records exist, which, because the law was set up to favor those who have political and
economic influence, tend to present things from the perspective of power. Even from that vantage point, if we acknowledge power’s biases, it is possible to detect the precontact structures of nationness. Archaeology and all of its illuminating discoveries add another dimension to our knowledge, a slice of the pie unavailable to the colonial chroniclers. With the twentieth century comes natural science and social science groundwork, which by studying the present, projects light back onto the past. A great body of research is being produced on how to read nonalphabetic sources, such as the Andean khipu, the Mayan epigraph, or the Nahua pictorial manuscript. Different pieces of the puzzle come together to create a more complete picture of those communities of people who came before.

This interdisciplinary approach draws on theories of transculturation, hybridity, coloniality and gender, and postulates two varieties of cultural appropriation, the vertical and the horizontal. These can be defined, respectively, as digging into one’s own past (a journey through time), and appropriating another’s culture after political and religious conquest, interethnic marriage, commodification of women or cultural objects (a journey through space). In a Newtonian sense, time is vertical, as one can only descend backwards on the genealogical tree, whereas space is horizontal and omnidirectional, because movement tends to advance from one territory to another in any two-dimensional direction possible. Cultures can also subsume each other simultaneously. Movement on a bidimensional plane causes new hybrid verticles of perspectives on the past to form.

A number of themes and paradigms emerge from my readings of this particular set of chronicles. By reading these in the context of anthropological and archaeological discovery, as well as genetic research, we become acquainted with Amerindian-friendly and gender-friendly concepts of the nation. By allowing for other interdisciplinarily derived information to fill in the blanks, we read between the proverbial lines. The schema of interweaving horizontal and vertical appropriation allows us to recognize the primordial role of women in the latter case, and in the former, the primordial role of myth, history, and lineage in the process of nation forming. Conspicuous in this latter case is the role of “literature” (logogrammatic, fine-line drawing, qelqa, khipu, oral) in precontact nations.

The realization that certain continuities between late antiquity and the early modern exist goes against the popular misconception that there was a lightning-bolt conquest and peoples became Hispanic immediately (magically?) after their encounter with the Spanish. However, following in the footsteps of Burga, Flores Galindo, León Portilla, Lockhart, Restall, Mignolo and others, the research presented in this book shows that the transition from late antiquity to early modernity is complex and nuanced. This is because various cultural modules arrived in the latter period as an unbroken chain, even if modified, while others were suppressed or forced underground. Thus the transition is uneven, and perhaps even incomplete. Furthermore, because abundant primary sources were unknown and even ignored, and because Spanish historiography reigned supreme, then and now, our interpretations of those events and societies of long ago can become distorted. Overcoming our bias based on Spanish bias requires reading not only between the lines, but also against the grain of both the chronicles and a sizable amount of the subsequent commentary, much of which has yet to go through a thorough process of decolonization. What is revealed is that Amerindian actors of the precontact and early postcontact periods are not solely the recipients of action; they are national actors (in late antiquity and early modern ways) in their own right, even when their own procedures of governance are modified or outright taken away from them. Spaniards clearly used elements of native governance when it served their purposes.

An appraisal of the terrible acts of violence committed by Spaniards against indigenous men, and especially women, should not imply that the English, the Dutch, and the French in their good time and spheres of influence did not commit acts equally horrendous to expand their nations. Discussing the violent acts Spaniards committed against Amerindians has nothing to do with the rhetorical ploy in politics known as leyenda negra, or “Black Legend” fostered by the English and other enemies of Spain during the early modern period and later. The term was coined by the renowned late-nineteenth-century author Emilia Pardo Bazán to label the discourse of Spain’s critics, who described the country’s culture as déchéance, or decadence. Pardo Bazán underscored that it was légende, not histoire. The “legend” and the mythologies associated with it came to refer to the actions of the Spanish in the New World and, as Stephanie Kirk notes, “circulate[d] among the various European imperial territories.” It was propagated especially in the Anglosphere to suggest Spaniards were “bad” colonists, as opposed to the English, the “good” ones.

That legend was nothing more than a political contrivance by the English to justify their own plundering in the New World and other regions.
emphasis on the thoughts and deeds of the Spanish as described in the early modern period has to do with this book’s focus on the Spanish-speaking areas of the Americas. An equally opportune approach would be one comparing English, Spanish, French, and Dutch colonialisms. There can be no privileging of one colonialism over the other. The discussion of Spanish actions here has to do with the activity not in and of itself, but as an activity that redirected the trajectories of formation of Latin American nations during the sixteenth century.

Finally, despite my emphasis on indigenous and mixed-heritage writers, I cannot pretend to represent heterogeneous cultures from a non-Western vantage point. I can only try to, in the words of Hans-Georg Gadamer, "make conscious the prejudices governing [my] own understanding, so that the text, as another’s meaning, can be isolated and valued on its own." It is necessary to resolve the paradox of ethnographic inquiry that Jacques Derrida spells out: "it is primarily a European science employing traditional concepts, however much it may struggle against them. Consequently, whether he wants to or not—and this does not depend on a decision on his part—the ethnologist accepts into his discourse the premises of ethnocentrism at the very moment when he is employed in denouncing them." Fabian takes this a step further and recognizes that social science itself "came to be linked to colonialism and imperialism." While Fabian is referring to the nineteenth century, this relationship is also manifest during the sixteenth, when Franciscans and Jesuits became the first ethnographers as part of their mission to spread Catholicism. It is also manifest in the twenty-first, when cultural histories such as this must work against the grain in order to assimilate prior knowledge and then to decolonize it.

Many studies of the nation begin at the nineteenth century, when Germany and Italy as we know them today took shape and when many Latin American nations declared their independence. Thus we have Ernest Renan’s seminal essay, "Qu’est-ce qu’une nation?" from the late nineteenth century, and Federico Chabod’s 1961 L’idea di nazione. Scholarship on the nation began to flower in the twentieth century with works such as Benedict Anderson’s 1983 Imagined Communities and Eric Hobsbawm’s 1990 Nations and Nationalism since 1780. Other scholars, such as Anthony Smith in his The Ethnic Origins of Nations (1986) and The Antiquity of Nations (2004), broadened the scope and glimpsed pre-Enlightenment configurations of nations. Smith was mainly concerned with Europe, for example, the connections between the ancient Greeks and modern-day Greeks. Much less interest has been generated on pre-Enlightenment nations in the Americas, which is our focus here.

With this awareness and new focus on sixteenth-century nations, we can approach indigenous viewpoints. We must admit though, we can never render those viewpoints as insiders. What is important is not arriving, but trying to arrive moving across a cultural bridge. As curious readers in the Anglosphere, we cannot truly sympathize with Qheswa, K’iche’, or Nahuatl-speaking peoples from their own perspectives. Much the way Las Casas offered a critique of the Empire from within the Empire or the way Walter Mignolo condemned alphabetical writing from within the standards of alphabetical writing, the present study reads between colonialism’s lines from within the neocolonialist grid.