

**INDIGENOUS WRITERS AND CHRISTIANITY IN CANADA, THE US, AND PERU**  
**SELECT CASE STUDIES FROM ACROSS THE HEMISPHERE**

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the way three indigenous writers and leaders, in Peru, the US, and Canada, used both their literacy and their Christian faith as a means for protesting the inequalities of colonial rule, to counter settler attempts to denigrate Indigenous culture and history, and to further their own personal agendas. Their methods of attaining their ends are put in both local and transnational contexts in order to offer insight into the nature of colonial rule in the Americas.

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## Introduction

In 1999, at an academic conference on indigenous religions in Guatemala, the mayor of Quetzaltenango participated on a panel with an Evangelical preacher and a Catholic priest. Mayor Rigoberto Quemé Chay declared that one cannot be Maya and Christian at the same time.<sup>1</sup> He believed that Christian and Maya worldviews are mutually exclusive. For Quemé Chay religion and ethnicity are not independent components of cultural identity, but are fused. It was a bold statement, but he is not alone in perceiving Christianity as a colonial relic. For example, after Pope Benedict XVI named the first Native American saint in the fall of 2012, the Mohawk Kateri Tekakwitha, the BBC speculated that Vatican-Aboriginal relations would be strengthened, which is important since Aboriginal Christians “are criticised by some in their communities for retaining the Christian faith, regarded by some as an imposition by European colonisers.”<sup>2</sup> Mayor Quemé Chay’s belief is indicative of a wider phenomenon.

That some consider Christianity detrimental to the Aboriginal populations of the Americas is not difficult to comprehend. In his book *Missionary Conquest*, Native American author George E. Tinker goes so far as to state that “the Christian missionaries—of all denominations working among American Indians nations—were partners in genocide” despite their best intentions.<sup>3</sup> Clergymen and women suppressed indigenous languages, dress, and religious practices. In more subtle fashion, literacy and history have also served as potent tools of colonialism. Scholars have provided in-depth analyses of Eurocentric notions of the connection between written records and historical truth, and inversely, the inadmissibility of oral histories.

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<sup>1</sup> Rigoberto Quemé Chay, Untitled presentation to a panel on indigenous religions, presented at the Canadian Association for Latin American and Caribbean Studies Congress, La Antigua, Guatemala, February 1999.

<sup>2</sup> “Pope names new saints including Native American,” *BBC News*, October 1, 2012, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-20020236>.

<sup>3</sup> George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 6.

Semiotician Walter Mignolo explains that this idea began to grow during the Renaissance and Mary Louise Pratt goes on to elaborate on the ways that the Enlightenment put Europe as the cultural and intellectual centre of the world in many Europeans' minds, and displaced Aboriginal leaders' historical claims to cultural sophistication, moral conscientiousness, and their ability to govern themselves.

However, the imposition of a single religion, history, and set of values also provided a forum in which Aboriginals could dialogue and debate with European society. The common moral precepts of Christianity sometimes enabled Aboriginals to combat social injustices that colonial governments and societies imposed on them. Such was the nature of their complicated social position. Furthermore, due to positions in the nascent governmental and ecclesiastical structures—such as those associated with evangelization, administration, and translation—some Aboriginals were able to expand their influence in colonial administrations.

This thesis explores how Aboriginal subjects negotiated their social position, which, in colonial settings, was often determined by their reaction to pressures to abandon indigenous customs and beliefs in favour of European ones. How they reacted was largely determined by the level of colonization that had already taken place in their specific region. In places where European people and cultures were very new, Aboriginal people tended to be more receptive to European ideas and beliefs. The more mature the colonial state—the more entrenched colonial governance and standards—the more reason Aboriginal people had to question the wisdom of European ways. Looking at case studies of Aboriginal people in colonial states, at different points of colonial maturity, can illuminate this complex social position and offer insights into the effectiveness of different strategies. I investigate three Aboriginal men who tried to lead their people to a better life. What that meant was partially determined by how long their society had

been living under a colonial regime. The three men are Guaman Poma de Ayala of Peru, William Apess of New England, and “Captain” John Swalis of British Columbia, and I will briefly introduce them here before their own chapters. Despite the assertion of Quemé Chay, none of them seemed to see a contradiction in their faiths and their identity as Aboriginal men.

### **Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala (ca. 1535—after 1616)**

Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala left behind an interesting literary footprint. His *The First New Chronicle and Good Government*<sup>4</sup> is a 1,189-page letter addressed to the Spanish monarch. This letter urges King Philip III to reform the colonial administration of the author’s native Peru. Poma denounced the colonial bureaucracy, which systematically oppressed the large Aboriginal population and appropriated their traditional governing structures in favour of one engineered by the Spanish. Part of what makes this work relevant is its combination of history writing, sermon, and treatise, which utilize Spanish and Quechua linguistic and artistic elements.

Guaman Poma grew up in the generation just after Spanish conquest of the Andes. He probably learned Spanish as a young adult and knew several dialects of Quechua and Aru, which helped him in his various bureaucratic positions in the colony. Though his Spanish was not perfect, he was certainly capable of expressing himself with persuasion, using Spanish historical, philosophical, and moral ideas to reinforce his arguments as well as 400 full page drawings.

### **William Apess (1798—1839)**

William Apess of New England experienced colonialism in a very different way. Living in a time and place where few Aboriginal people still lived, Apess grew up speaking English and developed fiery rhetorical skills, both in the pulpit and on paper. Excelling at passionate sermons and treatises, his denunciation of racial exclusion in a society of professed Christian values made

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<sup>4</sup> *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno.*



a compelling impact, especially because the United States was swept up in the religious phenomenon of the Second Great Awakening (1790s—1840s). He was among the first Native Americans writers to criticize the United States' treatment of Aboriginal people, which he did in *A Son of the Forest*, the first (or one of the first) Aboriginal autobiography published in the United States.<sup>5</sup>

William Apess experienced a dramatic conversion to Methodism. He saw in his new faith a powerful force that could and should be used to promote the difficult march toward racial equality and the destruction of notions of Aboriginal inferiority, which was the source of so much material exclusion, not to mention psychic trauma, in the predominately white society of 19<sup>th</sup>-century New England. He left behind many documents, including sermons, petitions, works of history, and works on ethnic difference.

### **Captain John Swalis (1810—1908)**

Captain John, chief of Soowahlie Reserve in British Columbia, just south of modern-day Sardis, never left any written documents such as letters, books, or a diary written by his own hand. However, archival documents mention him as does oral history passed down to the descendants of himself and his people. One of the most important written sources of information on him comes from the transcript of a speech he delivered in 1898, which was translated by Rev. Barraclough from Chinook Trade Jargon, which retells his life and conversion.

Captain John was the first chief of Soowahlie Reserve, aside from his uncle's very short term. He led the reserve through a time of many significant changes to its people. The years between the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century and 1908, when Captain John served as chief, saw the introduction

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<sup>5</sup> Barry O'Connell, ed., in William Apess, *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), 2; Barry O'Connell notes that it is "...one of the earliest—if not *the* earliest—autobiographies written and published by a Native American."

of thousands of white settlers and gold prospectors into the British Columbian mainland. As occurred with mass European immigration in other regions of the Americas, the people of Soowahlie suffered from a number of economic, cultural, and biological confrontations. To deal with these new problems, Captain John cooperated with the European society to promote Christianization and economic development, sometimes despite the protestations of those he governed.

### **Colonial Time**

The colonial context of each case study's time and location is important. Since Guaman Poma grew up after the Spanish had already taken over the region, he grew up in at least two cultural realms: the Spanish one and the Andean. The harsh Spanish treatment of Aborigines is something that Poma realized as he grew up and took on positions in the government. William Apess' world was much different. Colonial society was much more entrenched in 19<sup>th</sup>-century New England, where it was uncommon to see an Aboriginal person in the predominately white society. Daniel Mandell points out that "By the time of the Revolution, only a few native villages remained in eastern Massachusetts, and most Indians lived in small neighborhoods or as isolated families . . . ." <sup>6</sup> The exclusion and abuse of Aboriginal people by the United States was well known to Apess, who grew up in white foster homes for most of his childhood. Apess developed a stronger sense of Aboriginal pride when he travelled around Upper Canada after the War of 1812 despite fearing Aborigines as a child. Captain John, on the other hand, lived as massive European immigration was occurring. The danger to Aboriginal culture was not as clear to Captain John as it became for Apess and Poma. Captain John was raised in the Aboriginal

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<sup>6</sup> Daniel R. Mandell, *Behind the Frontier in Eighteenth-Century Eastern Massachusetts* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 5.

cultural sphere, but may have been part of an excluded class, and found in the European sphere the remedy to his social circumstance.

Since the places and times that these men lived in experience various level of European domination, it is useful to reconceptualise time. Although Guaman Poma lived long before either of the other case studies, his world was somewhat in between them in terms of the strength and severity of colonization. In William Apess' time the destruction of Aboriginal populations and culture was far more severe than in Guaman Poma's, and even more so than Captain John's time, when Europeans were just beginning to arrive in area in great numbers with the goal of assimilation and territorial confinement of Aboriginals. The three different case studies' place in "colonial time," as I term it, suggests that one can think of William Apess as living in a place much further along the colonial timeline than Guaman Poma, even though the latter lived more than a century before Apess; Captain John's colonial world was just being born during his upbringing and this, more than anything, helps us to understand his actions as Chief of Soowahlie Reserve.

### **Historical Writing**

In the eyes of some, alphabetic writing was an essential part of the separation between myth and history. Many European intellectuals attacked indigenous oral histories as mere folklore or hearsay. This allowed European intellectuals to try to colonize memory and reshape it through historical works about Aboriginals but, crucially, not by Aboriginals themselves. The Aboriginal points of view about the way in which European authors manipulated their histories were often dismissed because of their illiteracy, which delegitimized their historical arguments to self-rule. Written history was sometimes used as a tool to claim truth about the past. As the ultimate authority on truth, the Bible provided a deep history which the Europeans continued to

use well into the colonial periods described here, linking their history with the ancient stories of the Bible back to the first humans.

Semiotician Walter D. Mignolo elaborates on how the European Renaissance, largely praised for its intellectual and literary breakthroughs, fits into the wider context of colonialism. He states, “The celebration of the letter and its complicity with the book were not only a warranty of truth but also offered the foundations for Western assumptions about the necessary relations between alphabetic writing and history.”<sup>7</sup> Mary Louise Pratt takes Walter Mignolo’s critique of the Renaissance to the next step and examines the way in which the subsequent Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century produced more tools for a “planetary consciousness” with Europe as the cultural, economic, and intellectual centre.<sup>8</sup> She sees the history of colonization not merely as one power dominating another, but as a co-dependent relationship, focussed as she is on “contact zones,” which she describes as those places where cultures clash.<sup>9</sup> She calls this the “contact perspective” and it deals with how subjects are “constituted” based on their relationships to one another.<sup>10</sup> Other scholars have also underlined the importance of articulating “the other” for the colonizers’ own self-identification; Rolena Adorno states, “As a cultural process, the creation of the other seems to be a requirement and an inevitability of the subject, be it colonizer or colonized.”<sup>11</sup> For Europeans, the indigenous peoples of the Americas served as a backdrop against which to articulate their own civilization.

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<sup>7</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 1995, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 4.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>11</sup> Rolena Adorno, “El sujeto colonial y la construcción cultural de la alteridad [The Colonial Subject and the Cultural Construction of the Other],” *Revista De Crítica Literaria Latinoamericana* 14, no. 28 (January 1, 1988): 66; “Como proceso cultural, la creación de la alteridad parece ser una exigencia y una inevitabilidad del sujeto, sea éste colonizador o colonizado.”

Rolena Adorno touches on the problem the dominance of Europeans languages as well: “They [Aboriginal writers] struggled to present the native experience not as rituals, customs, ‘folklore’, but rather as chronology, dynasties, in one word, history.”<sup>12</sup> In order to create history that Europeans would find legitimate, Aboriginal writers had to represent it according to European traditions. To do that in the context of colonialism meant converting the history to the written form and using it to counter the damaging rhetoric that lay within colonial histories.

Guaman Poma and William Apess recognized this and attacked colonial conceptions of Aboriginal ethnic difference by writing history. Their writings were geared toward correcting the historical narrative that generally portrayed Aboriginal people as uncivilized or irrational. Both used historical revisionism to attack prevailing justifications for the colonization of Aboriginal lands and people and insert Aboriginal people back into the European historical and religious narratives as active participants and rational actors.

## **Religion**

In the predominately Christian cultures of American colonial states (either *de facto* or *de jure*), how one responded to the Christian message affected one’s social position. Christian missionaries actively evangelized among the Aboriginal populations and tried to steer them away from indigenous religious beliefs and rival denominations or sects of Christianity. This sometimes had a divisive impact on Aboriginal communities, who became split by competing denominations of Christianity or between those who wanted to maintain traditional religious beliefs and those who embraced Christianity. Even if missionaries imposed a common truth via Christianity, sectarian/denominational groups fought over correct interpretations of that truth.

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<sup>12</sup> Adorno, 64; Se esforzaba en representar la experiencia nativa no como ritos, costumbres, ‘folklore’, sino como cronología, dinastías, en una palabra, historia.

Guaman Poma grew up Catholic in a time and place where the threat of Protestantism was a distant concern for ecclesiastic officials. The threats of enduring Andean beliefs and unorthodox syncretism were the principal danger for missionaries, some of whom Guaman Poma aided in their mission to suppress religious dissent and promote conformity to Catholic orthodoxy. William Apress, on the other hand, grew up in mainline Protestant churches,<sup>13</sup> then struggled to find a place within competing Protestant denominations, ultimately choosing Methodism despite his foster parents' warnings against the detrimental influences of newer evangelical denominations that were sweeping the country during the Second Great Awakening. Captain John was deeply affected by the competition between Catholicism and Methodism in British Columbia, while living in a community that practiced Coast Salish (specifically Stó:lō) religious ceremonies. He ultimately converted to Methodism, which eased his relationship with nearby European farmers who spared this conviction, but strained his relationship with other Aboriginal groups, who were either Catholic or continued traditional religious practices, or some combination of both. In all three case studies, Christianity became an important tool for articulating their own identity and place in human history. Hilary E. Wyss says of William Apress, for example, that "He not only found personal salvation through the Methodist Church but came to envision this largely Anglo-American institution as the means through which all Natives could come to terms with their racial identity."<sup>14</sup> Indeed, for their fluid conceptions of indigenous identities, Christianity was paramount, and not a static, European-imposed version of indigenous identity.

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<sup>13</sup> Mainline Protestant churches were the older denominations of Protestantism, such as Lutheranism, Calvinism/Reformed, Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, and Anglicanism. Methodism grew out of the evangelical wing on Anglicanism (or low Anglicanism). The newer denominations were characterized by diminished hierarchies and more spiritual autonomy for the congregants, which was thought vulgar or radical by some of the more conservative mainline Protestants.

<sup>14</sup> Hilary E. Wyss, "Captivity and Conversion: William Apress, Mary Jemison, and Narratives of Racial Identity," *American Indian Quarterly* 23, No. ¾ (1999), 64.

## Historiography

Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’O (b. 1938) recognized the danger in colonization of the mind and the effect it can have on a colonized ethnic group. He states that it destroys “a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves.”<sup>15</sup> Similarly, the influential and revolutionary political theorist Frantz Fanon (1925-1961) used his training in psychiatry to explain the negative effects of colonization, especially in the context of blackness in the French Empire.

One important aspect of my research will involve the relationship between literacy and both history and Christianity as forms of colonial impositions and as a forms of transculturation used for pursuing ends not intended by the colonizer. In *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt explains that transculturation is a term used to describe the varying ways that a colonized people used imported values and institutions.<sup>16</sup> Such examples may include written language, European-style histories, and even Christianity—though the extent that Christianity is “European” is debatable. Many postcolonial scholars see this phenomenon as a way to give agency to the subaltern in a discipline that has largely excluded their voice. Pratt states that “while subjugated peoples cannot readily control what the dominant culture visits upon them, they do determine, to varying extents, what they absorb into their own, how they use it and what they make it mean.”<sup>17</sup> Institutions such as Christianity, writing, or education may be commandeered by the colonial subject and used to critique the domination of colonial enterprises using their own morality against them.

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<sup>15</sup> Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’O, quoted in Peyer, 3-4.

<sup>16</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2008), 7.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

In *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations*, John Lutz makes a similar case for what he terms the “moditional economy.” A cultural exchange, which may include trading of material objects or sharing ethnic practices and myths, was never straightforward; what one culture gave may be different than what the other culture received.<sup>18</sup> He goes on to explain a phenomenon whereby Aboriginal groups and European explorers encountered each other based on their pre-existing cosmologies and myths. The groups of the British Columbian coast were primed to conceive of European newcomers as spirits on a routine visit to the material world; Europeans viewed Aboriginal groups in light of Marco Polo’s stories of the Orient and Greek myths of exotic tribes. Similarly, in the context of Latin America, Rolena Adorno speaks to the way Spanish history primed them to justify their battles against infidels thanks to the stories of the Reconquista against the Muslim Moors.

The role of the Aboriginal intermediary between Aboriginal and colonial societies is explored in Yanna Yannakakis’ *The Art of Being In-Between*, in which she explores the role of the native colonial leadership in Villa Alta, Oaxaca. She notes, “In the period that immediately followed the conquest of Mexico and Peru, the Catholic Church and the colonial state identified the native nobility as a caste of colonial intermediaries, who by virtue of their legitimacy among native peoples could help administer colonial society.”<sup>19</sup> The example of Guaman Poma illustrated this, as did that of Captain John outside of Latin America. Yannakakis explains that this role as an intermediary was complicated and challenging since, “[T]hey help the colonial order in balance: most often, they defused tensions in colonial society, but on occasion . . . the pressures were such that they abandoned the middle ground.”<sup>20</sup> Captain John abandoned the

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<sup>18</sup> John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 10.

<sup>19</sup> Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-Between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008), 2.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.



middle ground when faced with a difficult decision on his reserve which enraged the residents but succeeded in preventing violence by nearby colonial settlers, whereas Guaman Poma continued to negotiate a highly nuanced middle ground.

In *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing, and Representation in North American Indian Texts*, David Murray sees a problem in the emphasis on difference in some historical writing. Murray prefers the work of Mikhail Bakhtin and his ideas on dialogue, referring to the mutually referential nature, of indigenous and European discourses as a way of “countering the self-sealing discourses in which Said and Foucault might potentially trap us.”<sup>21</sup> Cultural exchanges evolve as the respective parties learn more about one another’s customs to be better at assessing their “horizon of understanding.” Murray also calls attention to the one-sidedness of the translation process by explaining that when Europeans learned Aboriginal languages, it was never to gain insight into their worldview, but rather to manipulate it from within. This usually occurred when the balance of power was in favour of the Aboriginal population; when European dominance was more firmly established, European languages became predominant for intercultural communication. One of the goals of David Murray’s work

is to demonstrate the complex and various ways in which the process of translation, cultural as well as linguistic is obscured or effaced in a wide variety of texts which claim to be representing or describing Indians, and what cultural and ideological assumptions underlie such effacement.<sup>22</sup>

Murray convincingly suggests that translation involved significant cultural prejudices and is never unbiased. This is especially relevant regarding Captain John. John Lutz also elaborated on the tricky process of translation in British Columbia. He states that since Chinook Jargon was the principal language of intercultural dialogue, communication “was consummated in a language

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<sup>21</sup> David Murray, *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing and Representation in North American Indian Texts* (London: Pinter, 1991), 3.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

whose very construction guaranteed misunderstandings.”<sup>23</sup> This 700-word trade pidgin dominated intercultural communication in the region. Although the translation problem is difficult to overcome when the languages are not related and the cultural nuances are tricky to convey, this was even more so with Chinook because of its limited vocabulary and the prime importance of gestures and context.

Furthermore, the point of view of the “colonized” is something that itself needs to be nuanced and historicized. The dichotomy between the dominated and the oppressor implies that it is a matter of black and white. Joan Scott’s influential article, “The Evidence of Experience,” helps historians to think about the ways in which discursive formations and categories have been constructed, and the politics behind the act of telling a story or relating an experience; the way in which that story is told and understood is a product of a larger socio-political framework that influenced how that event would be experienced. Advocating for a non-foundationalist history, she states that “what counts as experience is neither self-evident nor straightforward; it is always contested, and always therefore political.”<sup>24</sup> How these three disparate figures told their stories and related their experiences to the reader inevitably calls into question the categories they reproduced as self-evident, what this assertion plays into or contests, and the power relations that informed how they related their arguments to their audience.

One of the major challenges in this field of study is the way in which scholars approach a research question when dealing with cultures with widely different knowledge systems. Mary Louise Pratt and Walter D. Mignolo allude to this in their respective works. Raimon Panikkar’s diatopical hermeneutics is central to Mignolo’s historical method. Panikkar supports his method of interpretation as follows:

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<sup>23</sup> John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), xi-xii.

<sup>24</sup> Joan W. Scott, “The Evidence of Experience,” *Critical Inquiry* 17, no. 4 (July 1, 1991): 797.

Diatopical hermeneutics is the required method of interpretation when the distance to overcome, needed for any understanding, is not just a distance within a single culture . . . , or a temporal one . . . , but rather the distance between two (or more) cultures, which have independently developed in different spaces (*topoi*) their own methods of philosophizing and ways of reaching intelligibility along with their proper categories.<sup>25</sup>

From here, Mignolo builds on Panikkar's method dealing with innumerable loci of enunciations (social position) and contexts—a method he calls pluritopic hermeneutics since it may include other dimensions, such as the differing spaces (*topoi*) of race, class, and gender. He is also quick to point out that he is not promoting cultural relativity or multiculturalism as it is generally conceived (i.e., everyone merely having a right to express themselves); Mignolo states that in the act of telling a story, “The politics of enacting and of constructing loci of enunciations are at stake, rather than the diversity of representations resulting from differential locations in telling stories or building theories.”<sup>26</sup> Behind what would superficially seem to be simple narratives is actually a power struggle.

Returning to Mary Louise Pratt, the differences in ethnographic works (like Spanish representations of Aboriginals for a Spanish audience), autoethnographic works (Aboriginal representations of themselves that engage with the colonizers' forms, usually for a wide audience), and autochthonous representations (purely indigenous forms, such as the Andean *quipus*) are nuanced. This research mainly dwells on autoethnographic texts since it takes work by indigenous men that utilized a wide variety of the colonizers' own forms of expression: the written word, certain literary genres, line drawings (as is the case for Poma), and Christian religious expression; the example of Captain John could be considered an oral autoethnographic text turned into written ethnographic text through the translation by the Methodist reverend, especially given the problems associated with the translation process already described.

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<sup>25</sup> Raimon Panikkar, quoted in Mignolo, 16.

<sup>26</sup> Mignolo, 15.

Therefore, this work needs to be viewed differently than the other autoethnographic texts. It is also of great importance that researchers do not dwell too heavily on ethnographic accounts by Europeans of the colonized subject, since “if one studies only what the Europeans saw and said, one reproduces the monopoly on knowledge and interpretation that the imperial enterprise sought”;<sup>27</sup> Walter Mignolo might say this reinforces a monotopic hermeneutic.

By speaking out and challenging the European claims to knowledge and righteousness, Aboriginals could make highly political statements about the monopoly on knowledge that the colonizers often claimed—though this may have been inadvertent at times. Colonial officials were aware of the danger in this, hence the attempts at indoctrination and the suppression of alternative languages. In this way, challenging the colonial discourse by promoting “repressed alternatives” (to use Foucauldian terminology) expresses a desire to shift the “geography of reason” (as Frantz Fanon might put it) on the part of Aboriginal leaders.<sup>28</sup> To do this is to undo the order of the colonizing enterprise by offering an alternative to the knowledge and systems of logic of the colonizers.

## **Methodology**

How did Aboriginal people respond to the establishment of European colonies, specifically the imposition of Eurocentric belief of history, religion, and the importance of literacy? For insight into this issue, a microhistorical study is useful to appreciate the nuances and idiosyncrasies that inform religious expression in the Colonial Era among America’s Aboriginal populations. What I attempt is a tri-microhistorical analysis that seeks to illuminate how Aboriginal Christian men understood and responded to Eurocentric notions of Aboriginal history, religion, and literacy. Since Christianity is a religion of the book and pretends to be, at

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<sup>27</sup> Pratt, 7.

<sup>28</sup> Nigel Gibson, *Fanonian Practices in South Africa: From Steve Biko to Abahlali baseMjondolo* (Scottsville, SA: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2011), 8.

least partially, a work of history, the categories of “history,” “religion,” and “literacy” shared somewhat fluid borders.

Although there is a great body of diverse literature on topics related to my research, the principal method of interpretation comes from my own reading of the primary works of Guaman Poma, William Apress, and Captain John. This is not to ignore the works of capable scholars, but rather to focus my interpretation on what these three men said, rather than what was said about them, either as part of broad categories such as “Aboriginals” or “the colonized,” or about them individually. Since I am comparing three disparate figures rather than whole groups of people, their idiosyncrasies will be more relevant than general theories. Structuralist theories of Aboriginals’ understanding of Christianity, for example, are sometimes unfulfilling when contemplating the individual since a person’s religious experience and convictions are highly personal matters which cannot be fully appreciated when explained as a part of a systemic process. Local circumstance matters as it can bring to light valuable exceptions to social theories. Agency is another casualty of structuralist interpretation, especially in a time when Aboriginal historians seek to highlight their active participation in historical change. As we shall see, these men often proved adept at shaping and challenging the discourse surrounding indigeneity. Therefore, considerations of transformation, imitation, and cultural appropriation<sup>29</sup> are important tools for the co-creation of a new world.

The transculturation of European institutions does not mean that those institutions are imperfect replicates of the “pure” European forms, but rather they become something new altogether. Since Contact, neither Europe nor America was ever the same, and appeals to that idyllic, Rousseauesque, Aboriginal culture is ahistorical, just as it is to think that European

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<sup>29</sup> In the approximate postcolonial jargon, hybridity, mimicry, and transculturation.

culture in the Americas was a carbon copy of European culture in Europe. (And, of course, Europe was a different place after contact with the Americas as well.) The place necessarily altered the European cultural mentality. There has been a great body of work describing the authenticity of Aboriginal groups, especially since the rise of anthropology in the later 1800s. Generally, to be considered “authentic,” Aboriginal groups needed to adhere strictly to pre-European practices and social organization. This interpretation has failed historical scrutiny because it places Aboriginal cultures in a suspended state of changelessness. Of course, as with any society, Aboriginal societies are dynamic and have changed with time, before European Contact as well as after it.

Paige Raibmon explores the topic of Aboriginal authenticity in her book *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast*. She has found that in European eyes, Aboriginals seemed to be on the march toward “civilization” by attending residential mission schools and communities, or else they were trapped in the “uncivilized” world of indigenous customs, languages, and religions. She examined the continuation of the potlatch among the Tlingit, the exposition of the Kwakwaka’wakw at the 1898 Chicago World fair, and the hop picking industry of Puget Sound. For Raibmon, these case studies demonstrated that for Europeans, “These categories [‘traditional’ and ‘modern,’ ‘uncivilized’ and ‘civilized’] revolved around the notion of an authentic core, a notion that ultimately undermined Aboriginal people’s bids for political rights, economic equality, and cultural survival. This was the ‘devil’s bargain’ of authenticity.”<sup>30</sup> But the Aboriginal groups themselves did not behave in a manner that accorded with these supposed cultural binaries; rather, Aboriginal people sometimes participated in the wage labour economy and in

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<sup>30</sup> Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 218.

anthropological expositions, not as a way of climbing up the ladder of civilization and shedding their “traditional” lifestyles, but rather as a way to adapt to the changing society and strengthen their cultural autonomy. The hop picking yards, rather than represent a place where Aboriginal people were transformed into civilized labourers, were used as gathering places to continue cultural ceremonies and customs. This is one example of transculturation.

As will become apparent in the chapters that follow, the writings, speeches, and actions of the three case studies discussed in this thesis have all suggested either a rejection or an ignorance of the “authentic core” that was promoted by some Europeans. Guaman Poma, William Apess, and Captain John, in their respective times and geographical locations, acted in whatever ways they thought would benefit them or their societies. This sometimes meant adopting, rejecting, or altering things that Europeans offered them or imposed upon them, such as imperial governance, the implementation of a writing system as the basis of official business, and Christianity as the one true faith. If Christian faith is inherently antithetical to a Mayan, or more broadly, an Aboriginal, worldview, as Rigoberto Quemé Chay would have us believe, then my three studies were quite abnormal. However, after considering their contexts and their actions, it should seem rational that they acted in the way that they did, and the notion of an authentic Aboriginal worldview and behaviour that was sometimes promoted by Europeans was not accepted by Aboriginal societies in general. From a historical perspective, Quemé Chay’s belief that to be Aboriginal and Christian at the same time was impossible is quite abnormal and, perhaps, inauthentic, not to mention the fact that it implicitly appeals to notions of an ahistorical authenticity.

## Don Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala

This chapter investigates how Guaman Poma (ca. 1535—after 1616) tried to realize his goals of administrative and cultural revitalization of traditional Andean society. I will discuss three main components of the philosophical and moral justifications for his ends. How he rejected some of the Spanish histories of his day and became a historical writer will be analyzed first. The moral considerations of religion will follow. Lastly, how this all relates to ideas about literacy will be investigated. Though Guaman Poma possessed the tools that should have allowed him to realize his goals in colonial society, he failed to win a land dispute with another Andean group, the Chachapoya, and was unable to rise up the colonial bureaucracy and change the colonial society for the improvement of himself and his people. This was partly due to an attack on his noble status by the Chachapoya. Guaman Poma is an illuminating case study for this thesis thanks to his utilization of Spanish works on Andean history, religion, and morality.

The reason Guaman Poma writes the way he does is only intelligible given some knowledge of the history of the Spanish conquest and administration of Tawantinsuyu<sup>31</sup> as well as his own relationship with the colonial authorities. After the death of the last Inca, Huayna Capac (1493-1527), war split Tawantinsuyu into two factions led by his sons, Huascar and Atahualpa. The opportunistic invasion of the Spanish conquistadors Francisco Pizarro and Diego de Almagro plunged the Andean world into further chaos; the ensuing struggle for power between these two conquistador factions for the spoils of war followed until direct royal control was asserted in 1548. Viceroy Toledo sought to regulate Spanish-Andean relations, especially

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<sup>31</sup> This is the name of the empire that the Incan rulers controlled prior to the Spanish conquest. Roughly translated, “Tawantinsuyu” means Land of the Four Provinces. The Incas divided their empire into four provinces (*suyu*): Chichansuyu, Cuntisuyu, Antisuyu, and Collasuyu.



regarding labour, taxation, and administration. This had detrimental consequences for those Andean nobles who had served the Incan government.

Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala was among the first generation raised after the establishment of the Spanish Viceroyalty of Peru (1542-1824). Previously, his father's family had been sent to Huamanga from their ancestral home in Huánuco by the penultimate Inca, Topa Inca Yupanqui, to serve as *mitmaqkuna*, which were ethnic groups that the Incas in Cuzco would send to conquered regions to promote conformity to Incan desires and culture. The *mitmaqkuna* suffered a loss of prestige when the Spanish Crown asserted control of the empire and used local ethnic lords (*kurakas*) to help administer the lands and collect taxes; since Viceroy Toledo considered Inca governance corrupt, *mitmaqkuna* became associated with illegitimate foreign rule<sup>32</sup>—an ironic twist since the *kurakas* were reinstated to bend to the will of distant Spain. Pre-Inca *kurakas* were favoured by the Toledo Reforms, which is likely why Guaman Poma makes a spirited case for his descent from the Yarovilca dynasty, which predated the first Inca, Manco Capac (c. 13<sup>th</sup> century).

In the 1690s, Guaman Poma was caught up in land disputes with the Chachapoya, who were allowed to settle in the lands of the Tingo-Guaman clan in the Chupas Valley near Huamanga. Due to bureaucratic mismanagement, both the Chachapoya's and the Guaman clan's title to the land had been confirmed by the court in Lima (the *audiencia*). From the early 1590s until 1600, both parties fought in court. In order to make his case, Guaman Poma dwelt on his family's noble lineage from Andean ethnic lords. The Chachapoya, on the other hand, had fought for the Spanish Crown during the war against conquistador rebels, and the Crown owed them

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<sup>32</sup> Rolena Adorno, "Guaman Poma and His Illustrated Chronicle from Colonial Peru: From a Century of Scholarship to a New Era of Reading," *The Royal Library and Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen*, 2001.

compensation.<sup>33</sup> To win a legal battle for land in this period, it was essential to be considered non-Incan, but of a hereditary lineage with strong ties to the land, as opposed to the *forasteros advenidizos*, strangers to the land, who were seen as illegitimate rulers.

Both Poma and the Chachapoya accused the other of being *forasteros*. The Chachapoyas finally won their case by convincing the Spanish judge that Poma was not a local noble, but a commoner named Lázaro who used deceit to claim a position of nobility. For this imposture, Poma was sentenced to 200 lashes, forced to pay all legal expenses, and banned from his home for two years.<sup>34</sup> After losing this case, Guaman Poma set out to write his *New Chronicle and Good Government* for the King of Spain, which would take 16 years to complete.

Peruvianist and literary critic Rocío Quispe-Agnoli extrapolates on the ways that Guaman Poma was able to speak to the King of Spain in his massive manuscript. Poma complements his Quechua title “*cápac*” (powerful lord) with the European title of “prince,” while also appropriating the Spanish title of nobility, “*don*,” empowering Andean titles—at least rhetorically—by equating them with Spanish ones.<sup>35</sup> Rolena Adorno’s article analyzes Poma’s writing in the context of the Spanish Golden Century of literature. Guaman Poma’s awareness of the premium on written texts caused him to critique European works for their detachment from reality.<sup>36</sup> As Rolena Adorno says, “In favour of native rule and opposed to colonialism, Guaman

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<sup>33</sup> Rolena Adorno, “Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala: Native Writer and Litigant in Early Colonial Peru,” in *The Human Tradition in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Kenneth J. Andrien, 2nd ed., The Human Tradition Around the World (Toronto: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 155.

<sup>34</sup> Rolena Adorno, “Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala: Native Writer and Litigant in Early Colonial Peru,” in *The Human Tradition in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Kenneth J. Andrien, 2nd ed., The Human Tradition Around the World (Toronto: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 177-180.

<sup>35</sup> Rocío Quispe-Agnoli, “‘Yo y El Otro’: Identidad y Alteridad En La ‘Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno’ [‘I and the Other’: Identity and Otherness in the ‘New Chronicle and Good Government’],” *MLN* 119, no. 2 (March 1, 2004): 230-233.

<sup>36</sup> Rolena Adorno, *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 10.

Poma was anti-Inca but pro-Andean, anticlerical but pro-Catholic.”<sup>37</sup> What Guaman Poma did in his writing was not only prove that he was familiar with the lettered world, but that the conclusions of many Spanish writers about the Andes were false.

As Walter D. Mignolo has demonstrated, societies without a writing system had a difficult time convincing Europeans that their history was valid.<sup>38</sup> This was something that Guaman Poma recognized and tried to change by becoming a writer of history, which he justified by outlining his methodology of using his own knowledge, conducting interviews, and consulting Spanish works about the Andes and its inhabitants. This was a challenge to the Spanish assumptions about the Andean past since he does not take the Spanish histories at face value, but rather uses them in conjunction with other sources to enter into an intellectual debate with Spanish writers.

A major component of the work relates to the relationship between Catholicism and indigenous religious practices of the Andeans. In Poma’s time, an anti-Spanish movement called *Taki Unquy* (dancing sickness) emerged from Huamanga and spread out to the coast and Upper Peru (modern Bolivia). It was a movement that promoted a return to Andean ways and a rejection of anything European—especially Catholicism. Those influenced by the movement became possessed by Andean spirits (*wak’as*) and honoured the pre-Conquest cults by dancing in trance-like states. This revival movement was mostly eliminated by the 1570s, largely thanks to church inspectors (*visitadores*), such as Cristóbal Albornoz, who Guaman Poma helped as interpreter and cultural advisor.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Rolena Adorno, *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 5.

<sup>38</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press), 1995, 3.

<sup>39</sup> Rolena Adorno, “Guaman Poma and His Illustrated Chronicle from Colonial Peru: From a Century of Scholarship to a New Era of Reading,” *The Royal Library and Museum Tusculanum Press, University of Copenhagen*,

Although Guaman Poma was a devoted Catholic and aided Albornoz to a great extent in eliminating Taki Unquy and syncretistic movements from 1568 to 1570, he did not see eye to eye with him. He observed the harsh and unjust punishments that Albornoz imposed on Andeans. In the late 1580s to the early 1590s, Guaman Poma served under the Mercedarian friar, Martín de Murúa, to instruct the Andean towns on proper Catholic practices. However, there was likely a falling out between these two as well, as is evident from the harsh and unflattering manner in which Poma treats Murúa in his Chronicle.<sup>40</sup> Guaman Poma's aid to ecclesiastic officials to reform the religious landscape of the Andes had a lasting impact on him; he formed a complex opinion on the relationship between Catholic orthodoxy and Andean culture.

Guaman Poma converted into written form the oral testimonies of his interviewees and the information contained in quipus, knotted cords used to record information. Poma draws from some very complex Spanish works, from philosophical treatises, to religious works, to polemics. He even offers an alternative etymology for his homeland.<sup>41</sup> In this way, Guaman Poma seeks to detangle the term *indio* from its Spanish connotations and give it a more positive, even divine, connotation. Guaman Poma used any rhetorical weapon he could find to aid him in his redemption of the Andeans and his homeland. He even challenged the Spanish assumptions about the primacy of alphabetic writing by promoting other forms of knowledge.

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2001; Rolena Adorno, "Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala: Native Writer and Litigant in Early Colonial Peru," in *The Human Tradition in Colonial Latin America*, ed. Kenneth J. Andrien, 2nd ed., The Human Tradition Around the World (Toronto: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2013), 177.

<sup>40</sup> Rolena Adorno, "Guaman Poma and His Illustrated Chronicle from Colonial Peru: From a Century of Scholarship to a New Era of Reading," *The Royal Library and Museum Tusulanum Press, University of Copenhagen*, 2001.

<sup>41</sup> Poma, 370; *Las Yndias*: he sometimes writes the Spanish word *en* (in) as *yn*. He therefore concludes that the region is called *Yndias* and its inhabitant *yndios* because its terrain is closer to the sun than Castile, and so it is *en/yn días* (in days). Also see Adorno's footnote which explains an alternative English translation of Poma's text: some have concluded that the inhabitants are called *yndios* because they were *en Dios* (in God). This would be an even better rhetorical point for Poma to make, but there is no indication of it in the original work, as far as I can see.

His full-page line drawings are sources of text that are inseparable from the rest of the work. Guaman Poma did not solely rely on broken Spanish to convince his Spanish audience of the gravity of his work, but rather supplements it with about 400 illustrations as well. His writing on the harshness of the punishment exacted upon unorthodox Andeans by church inspectors and magistrates bring the brutality of the colonial relationship into light in an age without photography. He uses allegory to represent the destruction of Andean society, such as in his depiction of a poor Andean woman about to be consumed by six animals, such as the snake (magistrate), to the lion (landlords), to the fox (father of doctrine).<sup>42</sup> Other times, his illustrations are more literal, like when he depicts a child being cruelly punished by a priest (and later, in a very similar drawing, by a teacher).<sup>43</sup> The equality of the prideful sinners in hell would surely have made a horrifying display to the king, especially with the bearded Spaniard right up front.<sup>44</sup> The very similar drawings depicting Adam and Eve and the first Indians using the same digging sticks in the “Ages of the World” and “Ages of the Indians,” respectively, imply that they were right there with the first humans of creation and are part of Judeo-Christian history.<sup>45</sup>

The Andean quipus, or knotted cords that were used by *quipucamayocs* or cord readers, are also defended in his Chronicle. The Spanish did not trust quipus because they could only be read by specialists, and so the Spanish could not verify the information for themselves.<sup>46</sup> But from the beginning, Guaman Poma notes that he takes some information from learned

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<sup>42</sup>Poma, 708, 936; Regarding the allegory of the animals, see Adorno’s footnotes (p. 708). She notes how the animals are related to Las Casas’ depiction of the Indians as a gentle sheep and the Spanish as wild beasts. Also, see Poma’s explanation of why each person is depicted as the animals they are on page 709.

<sup>43</sup> Poma, 599 and 684.

<sup>44</sup> Poma, 955.

<sup>45</sup> Compare Poma, 22 and 48.

<sup>46</sup> Frank Salomon, *The Cord Keepers: Khipus and Cultural Life in a Peruvian Village* (Duke University Press, 2004), 113.

quipucamayocs. Later, he depicts an Andean councilman with a quipu and a book.<sup>47</sup> Guaman Poma seems to be insisting on the validity of the quipu method of retaining information by, again, equating them with things the Spanish would understand—books.

Guaman Poma does not shy away from benefiting from the works of Spanish accounts, either. On the other hand, he does not always accept their conclusions, but rather uses their work to make his own points. Sometimes he even inserts some apocryphal accounts into a narrative that dwells on Spanish histories like Augustín de Zárate's *History of the Discovery and Conquest of Peru* (1555). Poma changes Zárate's details: the number of anti-Crown Spanish soldiers under Pizarro was increased by a factor of 10 at the Battle of Huánuco, while the number of Spanish survivors was decreased by a factor of 10. Another example comes from El Palentino's account of the Peruvian Civil Wars. While in this Spanish history Andean troops are depicted fighting against both the forces of the Extremaduran conquistador Hernández Girón *and* the viceroy, Guaman Poma changes this to depict an Andean army in the service of royal troops and decidedly against the conquistador faction.<sup>48</sup>

Poma furthermore dwells on certain religious devotional texts as inspiration for his moral message. Fray Luis de Granada's *Monument to the Christian Life* (1566) served as inspiration for his tropes of Christian heroism and sacrifice. This added deep Christian meaning to the events of the past as well as a lens through which to interpret them.<sup>49</sup> The treatises of Bartolomé de las Casas entitled *Treatise of the Twelve Doubts* (1564) also add rhetorical fire to his work. The argument of Las Casas is stated succinctly by Rolena Adorno:

By natural, divine, and human law, the native inhabitants of the Americas, who never harmed or had been subject to any Christian prince, are free and sovereign in their

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<sup>47</sup> Poma, 814; for other drawings of quipus, see 320, 337, 362.

<sup>48</sup> Rolena Adorno, *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 16-17.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

own lands; the papal bulls of donation gave the church the right to evangelize but not to dispossess the native peoples of their lands or to abrogate their right to rule them. Spain's invasion and rule of the Indies is illegitimate and tyrannical; the only means by which Spain can rule legitimately is at the initiation and with the free and willing consent of the native peoples of the Indies.<sup>50</sup>

Just as the Dominican friar advocated that all Aboriginal groups have jurisdiction over their lands, regardless of their non-Christian beliefs, Guaman Poma states, "Castile belongs to the Spaniards, and the Indies to the Indians, and Guinea, to the blacks. Each one of these is a legitimate proprietor, not only according to the law, as St. Paul wrote, who for ten years resided [in Rome] and called himself a Roman."<sup>51</sup> Poma relates the Spanish newcomers to the Incan *mitmaqkuna* since both were sent to promote certain agendas in foreign lands. But rather than being sent to a conquered land, Poma does not believe that the Incan lands were ever conquered, and even if they were it would not have been a just conquest. Therefore, the Spanish are subject to Andean laws since the Andeans are independent and unconquered, with the moral authority of the Church and the philosophical persuasion of Las Casas to reinforce his position.

Furthermore, according to Poma, the Andeans were already Christians by the time the Spanish arrived, a major point of deviation from Las Casas' rationale. As such, the Spanish had no right to justify warfare against the Andeans and did not have a reason to evangelize, which Guaman Poma saw as so damaging, judging from his harsh portrayals of Spanish friars and missionaries. When this is combined with Poma's account of the Andean delegates accepting the authority of Emperor Charles V at the time of the arrival of Francisco Pizarro and Diego de Almagro at Tumbes, the *requirimiento* provides absolutely no sanction of war, making Spanish rule, not only harsh, but illegitimate by their own standards.

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<sup>50</sup> Rolena Adorno, *Polemics of Possession in Spanish American Narrative* (Yale University Press, 2007), 41.

<sup>51</sup> Poma, 929: "Castilla es de los españoles y las Yndias es de los yndios y Guenea es de los negros. Que cada éstos son lexítimos propetarios, no tan solamente por la ley, cómo lo escriuió San Pablo que de dies años estaua de poción y se llamaua rromano."; Rolena Adorno, *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 25; Adorno, *Polemics of Possession*, 43.

According to Poma, during the reign of the second Inca (who brought idolatry and demons into the region of Collau), Jesus was born, died, ascended to heaven, and sent the Holy Spirit to guide his apostles. These apostles went throughout the world—including to the Andes. Saint Bartholomew went to Collau, erected the Cross of Carabuco, and converted the inhabitants.<sup>52</sup> But even before the Cross of Carabuco, Jesus was visited by “the three king-mages Melchor Indian, Baltazar Spanish, Gaspar black” according to “the Scripture and as experience shows. The birth of the Creator of the world was adored as such.”<sup>53</sup> This provides further evidence that the Andeans had a genealogical legacy stretching back to Jesus’ infancy.

After the first Indians settled the land and established dominion over the animals, they lost faith and hope in God. They forgot their past, though they recalled a cataclysm caused by flooding. They then became like orphans who had forgotten their parents. In the second age, although they had forgotten the commandments and the Bible, they still yearned to know God and shouted out to him for guidance, which they repeated in subsequent ages. They intuitively knew that God is one, composed of three persons; in other words, they believed in the Trinity despite not having the benefit of formal instruction on this from Church officials.<sup>54</sup> Poma’s corresponding drawing of this age is of a man on his knees with hands in prayer position calling out to *Pacha Camac*, or the creator of the world. In the third and fourth ages, Guaman Poma goes on to outline how the Aborigines built cities and had ruled according to just laws—there were no thieves, prostitutes, greed or lust, which he contrasts with his own time when the sinning Spaniard was almost cliché. Throughout, he points out time and again that they did not worship idols or *wak’as*, but rather, even in this shadow of forgetting, grew to know more about God.

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<sup>52</sup> See Poma’s drawing of this with St. Bartholomew and the baptized Indian, 92.

<sup>53</sup> Poma, 91; “. . . los tres rreys magos Melchor yndio, Baltazar español, Gaspar negro, según fue adorado por los tres rreys del mundo, cigún la Escritura y la esperencia muestra. El nacimiento del Criador del mundo fuese adorado acá.”

<sup>54</sup> Poma, 55; “Tenían los yndios antiguos conocimiento de que abía un solo Dios, tres personas.”



Near the end of Guaman Poma's chapter on the fourth and final pre-Inca age of the Indians, *Auca Runa*, he gives a list of the various Andean lords that ruled since the first age. For the vast majority of time, Guaman Poma notes the virtuousness of the societies that were ruled. However, near the end of *Auca Runa* came a new generation of rulers from the mountains, who were little more than animals; these are war mongering peoples, who eat human flesh, and have "men like women,"<sup>55</sup> and were responsible for all kinds of evils.

A dynasty from around Lake Titicaca began to take power and expanded into what would be renamed Cuzco, starting with Manco Capac (the first Inca), who deposed the legitimate local ruler of Cuzco, Inca Tocay Capac, and started an unholy line of rulers.<sup>56</sup> Guaman Poma gave four reasons why Manco Capac's rule was illegitimate: 1. He did not have a house or land; 2. He is the son of a demon (who he married); 3. The myth that his parents were the sun and the moon is a lie; 4. Having no father and a demon mother/wife, he has no honour and is not even human.<sup>57</sup> These Incas brought with them their idols and imposed them on the local population; eventually, they expanded throughout the Andean region, spreading the idolatry:

You must see from the beginning of Manco Capac Inca until the legitimate Huascar Inca was ended, oh lost Inca!, that is how I want to call you because since you entered you were idolater, enemy of God because you have not followed the ancient law of knowing the lord and creator God, . . .<sup>58</sup>

The entire Incan period was marked by depravity and a turning away from God. Guaman Poma made divine castigation intelligible to his Catholic reader by relating it to the punishments that God visited upon figures in the Bible; for example, he relates the punishment for idolatry visited upon the Andeans in the time of the great conqueror Pachacuti with the punishment of Lucifer,

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<sup>55</sup> Poma, 77.

<sup>56</sup> Poma, 84.

<sup>57</sup> Poma, 81-82. For the information on Manco Capac marrying his mother it is also necessary to see the chapter of Queens (coya), especially p. 121, which deals with Mama Vaco Coya, wife/mother of Manco Capac.

<sup>58</sup> Poma, 119; Aués de uer desde el comienso de *Mango Capac Ynga* hasta que se acabó el lexítimo *Uascar Ynga*. ¡O perdido Ynga!, acá te quiero dezir porque desde que entrastes fuerdes ydúlatra, enemigo de Dios porque no as seguido la ley antigua de conoser al señor y criador Dios, . . .

and of Sodom, and of humankind during the Flood.<sup>59</sup> Every now and again, some Incas tried to do good, but again they were led astray (which happens frequently in the Bible). The 8<sup>th</sup> Inca, Vira Cocha Inca, tried to abolish idols and *wak'a* worship, but he was prevented by his wife.<sup>60</sup> The Incas were usurpers and demonic in the eyes of Guaman Poma. The age of the Incas was an age of darkness, which the Spanish helped to end. Unfortunately, Spanish rule would prove to be little better than that of the Incas.

With the death of Huascar Inca, Guaman Poma states that he left his royal garbs to the Catholic King, and the Andeans accepted this new leadership:

And into this disruption [the war between Huascar and Atahualpa], the Spanish of Castile leapt into this kingdom and the Indians did not defend themselves like the Indians of Chile. And the Indian lords of this kingdom gave themselves to the service of God of the regal crown of his Majesty.<sup>61</sup>

There was, in fact, no great Spanish conquest—merely recognition by the Andeans of the authority of the Pope and the King. This is a theme that he repeated time and again with the phrase “*y no ubo conquista*” (and there was no conquest). This ran counter to the Spanish theory of just war, which stated that if a people rejected the *requirimiento*—a call to accept the authority of the King and Pope—then war was necessary to bring the group to God. Guaman Poma asserts that the Andeans immediately bent the knee, and so the war was not just.

The Spanish, when considering all the abuses that they visited upon the Andeans, came out looking like another plague from God for the evils of the Incas. They are not, as many Spanish would probably have liked to believe, a blessing. In his chapter entitled “Spanish Conquest and Civil Wars,” Poma notes how a Spaniard named Colúm (perhaps from Colón, Spanish for Columbus) brought news of the gold and silver to Spain. The Spanish were lost in an

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<sup>59</sup> Poma, 109.

<sup>60</sup> Poma, 107.

<sup>61</sup> Poma, 117; “Y en este alboroto, saltaron de Castilla a este rreyno los españoles y no se defendieron los yndios como los yndios de Chile. Y se dieron al seruicio de Dios de la corona rreal de su Magestad los señores yndios deste rreyno.”

ever increasing covetous frenzy. They became like cats with a rat within its grasp, or “they were like desperate men, dumb, crazy, judgement lost from the lust of gold and silver.”<sup>62</sup> They displaced entire Andean populations and they even killed their fellow Spaniards over the spoils. Even worse were the magistrates, fathers (priests), and landlords, who Poma claimed will be condemned to hell for their lust.<sup>63</sup> Poma convincingly illustrates that if there was barbarity and violence in the Andean past, there was just as much in Spanish history as well.

While the Andeans fell from the path of righteousness and fell into idolatry, so too did the Spanish:

How the Spanish had idols as the reverend father Friar Luis de Granada wrote: That a gentile Spaniard had his silver idol, that he had made with his hands and another Spaniard stole it. From that he went weeping to find his idol; he would cry more for the idol than for the silver. That’s how the barbarian and gentile Indians would cry when their idols were they were smashed in the time of the conquest.<sup>64</sup>

From the beginning of the *New Chronicle*, it is evident that Guaman Poma portrays himself as a devout Catholic and loyal subject of the King of Spain. The title page depicts the Pope on his seat and under him “His Holiness”<sup>65</sup> is written. On the right side of the page, two men pray, one in European dress and the other in Andean. There are also two coats-of-arms, one Spanish and the other Andean—very likely that of Guaman Poma himself since it depicts a falcon and a puma (or, in Quechua, *guaman* and *poma*). A letter to the Pope follows the title page, referring to him as “Celestial King” and above earthly emperors, giving thanks for the sacraments, asking for blessings, and humbly referring to himself as the Pope’s faithful vassal. The following letter,

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<sup>62</sup> Poma, 376; “Estauan como un hombre desesperado, tonto, loco, perdidos el juycio con la codicia de oro y plata.”

<sup>63</sup> Poma, 376; “Peor son los desta uida, los españoles corregidores, padres, comenderos. Con la codicia del oro y plata se uan al ynfierno.”

<sup>64</sup> Poma, 369; “Cómo los españoles tubieron ydolos como escriuió el rrebrendo padre fray Luys de Granada<sup>1</sup>: Que un español gentil tenía su ydolo de plata, que él lo abía labrado con sus manos y otro español lo abía hurtado. De ello fue llorando a buscar su ydolo; más lloraua del ydolo que de la plata. Ací los yndios como bárbaros y gentiles lloraua de sus ydolos quando se los quebraron en tiempo de la conquista.

<sup>65</sup> SV. *STIDAD*; Poma, 0 (portada).

addressed to the King of Spain, refers to Philip III as Holy Regal Catholic Majesty.<sup>66</sup> It is evident that Guaman Poma accepted the authority of both the Catholic King of Spain, and of the Pope in Rome. With his allegiances unmistakably clear, he continues with the historical narrative mentioned above, then to issues of morality.

The first pages of the “Chapter on Church Inspectors,” Poma depicts his former supervisor, Cristóbal de Albornoz, with two Andeans bound around the neck, and in the text notes “that the legitimate inspector and their officials penalize and steal and rob from the Indians . . .”<sup>67</sup> and later he would say that “they [Andeans] fear the father of doctrine because they’re cunning like foxes and have degrees that they know more than the fox about . . . robbing their haciendas and women and daughters . . . . And thus destroys the poor in this kingdom of Indians and there is no cure.”<sup>68</sup> For Poma, the church inspectors are dangerous precisely because they appear to be Christian in behaviour, but they are like wolves in sheep’s clothing. In the second “Chapter of Considerations,” a hypothetical dialogue between the King of Spain and Guaman Poma takes place. The King asks Poma why the Indians are not multiplying as before; he responds that it is because the doctrinal fathers, *encomenderos*,<sup>69</sup> and other Spaniards take the best women and rob their haciendas.<sup>70</sup> This kind of behaviour runs completely counter to the moral Christian virtues and Guaman Poma seems eager to tell the King.

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<sup>66</sup> S.C.R.M, or Sacra Católica Real Magesdad.

<sup>67</sup> Poma, 691; “Que los dichos uecitadores y sus oficiales penan y hurtan y rroban a los indios . . .”

<sup>68</sup> Poma, 709; “Del padre de la dotrina, le temen los yndios porque son mañosos y sorras y licinciados que sauen más que la sorra de cogille y ciguille y rroballe sus haziendas y mugeres y hijas como mañoso y letrado licinciados, bachilleres. Por eso se llaman letrados; el buen sorra es dotor y letrado. Y ancí destrúe en este rreyno a los pobres de los yndios y no ay rremedio.”

<sup>69</sup> An *encomendero* is someone who was granted an *encomienda* (estate), which privileged him to the tribute of local Aboriginal population in return for defense; this quickly became a form of semi-slave labour, if not outright slavery as the Aboriginal subjects normally had to pay in labour.

<sup>70</sup> Poma, 976.

However, some of the exemplary Christian acts can be seen throughout the *New Chronicle*, especially in the chapter of the “Sentences of the Exemplary Christians.” The members of Poma’s family figure prominently. Guaman Poma mentions his mestizo half-brother, the hermit Martín de Ayala, who taught Guaman Poma to read and instructed him in proper Christian conduct.<sup>71</sup> Furthermore, Guaman Poma’s father was an exemplary Christian, going from powerful lord to a patron of the hospital in Huamanga. Here and elsewhere, Poma gives much credit to the good Christian Spaniards and those who work in his kingdom: Friar Luis de Granada, Jerónimo de Oré, Bartolomé de las Casas, and others. He asks the reader to “consider how the wise that compose books and write them for the service of God, though they write it as fables, some are good for the service of God and some for the correction of life or for the training or the good for the body of the world.”<sup>72</sup> His goal in all this seems to be to show that he can recognize good Christian conduct where it is practiced, and to prove that he and his family are noble, pious Christians.

Guaman Poma also relates the overthrow of the Incas to divine providence, which was foretold to the Incas since the time of Topa Inca Yupanqui by demons, and fulfilled by the death of Huayna Capac.<sup>73</sup> However, after the overthrow of the Incas, the Spanish began to treat the Andeans as if the Andeans were responsible for being subjugated by the Incas. Furthermore, even when the Andeans were subjected to the idolatry and *wak’a* worship that was imposed by the Incas, Poma notes “with all that they kept the commandments and good works of compassion of God in this kingdom, which the [Spanish] Christians do not keep now. You must consider,

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<sup>71</sup> Poma, ch. 2.

<sup>72</sup> Poma, 926; “Conzederá como los sabios que conponen los libros y lo escriuen para el seruicio de Dios, aunque lo escriua de fábulas, algunos son buenos para el seruicio de Dios y algunos para emienda de uida o para entretenimiento o bien del cuerpo en el mundo.”

<sup>73</sup> Poma, 380.

Christian, that it is the cause of the bad fathers [priests].”<sup>74</sup> In this way, the Spanish were tools of God, but not examples to follow, similar to how God hardened Pharaoh’s heart to demonstrate his own power in the Book of Exodus.

Poma went to great lengths to show that his history was taken from the best possible sources. In the letter to the King of Spain, which appears very early in the work, he mentioned the difficulty in creating a history when there were no written documents. Poma noted, however, that he was able to use quipus, as well as eyewitnesses in the service of his work, which he repeats in his “Prologue to the Christian Reader.” His purpose is to relate the history of Peru from the first Indians to the Spanish king.<sup>75</sup> The chapter starts with some of his own family history, instead of with the ages of the world, or the ages of the Indians, which appear afterward. Guaman Poma’s family were ancient lords of Huánuco in Chinchaysuyu and directly related to the Yarovilca dynasty.<sup>76</sup> They were conquered by Topa Inca Yupanqui, who honoured their nobility and made Poma’s grandfather and father the right hand of the Inca for 50 years.<sup>77</sup> Guaman Poma makes even clearer his own noble heritage by explaining that his father, don Guaman Martín Malque de Ayala, married the Inca’s daughter, doña Juana Curi Ocllo. He was so esteemed that he was sent as ambassador to receive Emperor Charles V’s envoy led by Francisco Pizarro and Diego de Almagro at Cajamarca on the part of Huascar, who Guaman Poma insisted was the legitimate Inca, as did the Spanish, and who the bastard Inca, Atahualpa,

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<sup>74</sup> Poma, 926; “Con todo eso guardaron los mandamientos y buenas obras de misericordia de Dios en este rreyno, lo qual no lo guarda agora los cristianos. Aués de conzederar, cristiano, ques la causa de los malos padres.”

<sup>75</sup> Poma, ch. 1.

<sup>76</sup> Raúl Porras Barrenechea, “El cronista indio Felipe Huamán Poma de Ayala,” *Universidad Nacional Mayor de San Marcos*, 1948, [http://sisbib.unmsm.edu.pe/bibvirtual/libros/linguistica/legado\\_quechua/el\\_cronista.htm](http://sisbib.unmsm.edu.pe/bibvirtual/libros/linguistica/legado_quechua/el_cronista.htm).

<sup>77</sup> Poma, 111; “Y en su uida gouernó cincuenta años el *capac apo* [señor poderoso] *Guaman Chaua*, nieto de *Yaro Bilca*, Allauca Guanoco, agüelo de *capac apo* don Martín de Ayala y de su hijo, el autor don Felipe *Guaman Poma* de Ayala.”

unfortunately murdered.<sup>78</sup> Martín Malque de Ayala received the Christians and they embraced. Later in the chapter, and again in the 19<sup>th</sup> chapter on the Spanish conquest and civil wars, Guaman Poma relates how his father received the surname “de Ayala”. After the conquistadors had shown their disloyalty to the Crown, Guaman Poma’s father served the Crown’s captain-general, Luis de Ávalos de Ayala, in a battle against the traitor Gonzalo Pizarro; when one of Gonzalo’s captains was to kill Luis de Ávalos de Ayala, Guaman Poma’s father saved his life, and in return gained honour and adopted his surname.<sup>79</sup> These episodes not only place Guaman Poma’s father as a powerful lord of the Andes, but also as a faithful servant of the Spanish Crown. After explaining his family’s history as well as his methodology for this work, Poma continues to elaborate the history of the world.

Ultimately, the story of Guaman Poma is a story of tragedy. Despite his long service to the Crown and the Church authorities in the Viceroyalty of Peru he lost his ancestral lands and mentions that, at the age of 80, he “leaves poor, naked, and walks in winter.”<sup>80</sup> He did not regain his ancestral lands; he went from a powerful Andean lord in service of the Spanish Crown and the Catholic Church, to an impoverished traveller, disenchanted with promises of the growth of Christian virtue and justice in his kingdom.

In Guaman Poma’s massive manuscript he insists on the spiritual equality of the Spanish and the Andeans as well as the historical inaccuracies of the Spanish ethnohistories. The Andeans eventually lost their way due to the Incan conquests, but God brought them back to Christianity with the coming of the Spaniards; the Spanish, on the other hand, had the written Bible to reaffirm their faith, but, once they came to the New World, were struck down by the

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<sup>78</sup> Poma, 16 and 378; Poma contradicts himself a bit by mentioning that he was the ambassador of Atahualpa, but this is probably an error since he mentions that he was Huascar’s ambassador a great many times throughout.

<sup>79</sup> Poma, ch. 2.

<sup>80</sup> Poma, 1106.

same idolatry that they accused the Andeans of practicing. This, had the Spanish king read it, should not have convinced him of the superiority of the Andeans as a people, but rather awaken him to all the injustices that were being carried out in both his name and the name of the Pope. For example, both the Spanish and the Andeans recognized the authority of the Pope in Rome and the King of Castile; they both went from a state of relative innocence and godliness to a state of idolatry; they are both descended from Noah after the Flood; they both have their respective apostles, dating back to just after the death and ascension of Jesus. They were equals, though they rarely acted as such.

In short, what Poma is responding to is the belief that the Andeans are not fit to govern themselves or settle their own affairs. The peaceful submission of the Andeans threatens to undermine the Spanish conclusion that the wars against the Aboriginal people of the Andes was a response to Andean resistance to Christianity and the authority of the Emperor, which were the basis of the *requirimiento*. The belief in the inferiority of the Andeans was also challenged by Poma. His claim that the imperial delegations of Huascar and Charles V met peacefully and the former submitted to the latter's rule undermines the Spanish belief that the Andeans were irrational and violent or that they surrendered out of fear or confusion.<sup>81</sup>

What Guaman Poma was craving was a return to a pre-Incan form of Andean governance, which was characterized by innocence, justice, and good government. He could see this potential within his grasp—when he worked for the colonial government and church officials—but as time went on, and as the Spanish implemented their reforms, that noble dream became increasingly unachievable. As disease decimated Andean populations, as Andean blood became diluted with interracial progeny, as immigration from Africa and Spain increased, and as

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<sup>81</sup> Rolena Adorno, *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 30.



Toledo's *reducciones* displaced local communities into larger congregations disconnected from ancestral lands, Guaman Poma could not help but become disenchanted with the future of his home. The first Spanish arrivals, bringing the authority of the Pope and an alliance with a new king, devolved into lust, greed, and brutality. They became worse than even the Incas, with all their sorcery and idolatry.

With this letter to the King of Spain, Guaman Poma employs an impressive amount of determination and wit. He not only proved that he could navigate within his local and other Andean societies, but could also recognize and utilize the best Spanish justifications for the colonization of Peru and point out their absurdity. And yet, for all this, he was unable to realize his goals. Since the Chachapoya convinced the Spanish judge that he was a commoner named Lázaro, he lost what was to be a juridical victory for himself and his kin. He may have lost his home, but his *New Chronicle and Good Government* proved he was anything but common.

Guaman Poma de Ayala saw no contention between his Christian faith and his ethnic identity as an Andean. For him, being Christian was just as much part of his culture as anything. He relied on their Christian past to argue for self-government and reinstatement of Andean customs. After all, his people converted after the visit of one of Jesus' apostles! The Incas, who Guaman Poma did not consider part of his ethnic group, caused great calamity to come to his people, and they suffered spiritual degradation as a result. However, this was simply part of their past, which was remedied when they found their way again. This not unlike one of the themes in the Bible: God's people routinely stray from their path, but ultimately return to it. The Jewish and Christian Europeans should not have found this narrative strange.

## William Apess

In this chapter how William Apess (1789— after 1838) struggled to become an active historical agent, how this was influenced by religion, and how he utilized literacy will be examined. Similar to Guaman Poma, the story of William Apess ends in tragedy, despite being able to communicate persuasively to his European audience about the injustices inflicted upon Aboriginal people and the hypocrisy of the European Christians. Also like Guaman Poma, Apess used his Christian morality to expose the sins of the European colonizers and used European histories and treatises to combat American complacency with their past and the sense of white superiority in American society. Rather than living in a conflicted state between Aboriginal and Christian, Apess considered his faith as part of himself, and used to promote social reform.

The principal theoretical considerations I have consulted have come from scholars writing about the interpretive strategies for analyzing texts left by Aboriginal writers of religious confession, autobiography, or political dissent; William Apess' writings as a whole fit into all these categories. James Treat, in the introduction to an anthology he edited entitled *Native and Christian: Indigenous Voices on Religious Identity in the United States and Canada*, speaks to the difficulty in asserting an identity that is simultaneously Aboriginal and Christian. In the introduction, Treat candidly and clearly illuminates the struggle past and present Aboriginal Christians face in a society that often considers these two identities mutually exclusive. Too often, people think that one must yield to the other for the sake of religious sincerity or indigenous authenticity.

Similarly, George E. Tinker, an Osage-Cherokee pastor and professor at Iliffe School of Theology, claims the cultural violence that missionaries visited upon Aboriginal communities

was no less damaging than a military conquest, claiming that “missionaries . . . were partners in genocide.”<sup>82</sup> He describes this cultural genocide “as the effective destruction of a people by systematically or systemically (intentionally or unintentionally in order to achieve their other goals) destroying, eroding, or undermining the integrity of the culture and system of values that defines a people and gives them life.”<sup>83</sup> While their intentions may have been noble, convinced as some of them were of European cultural superiority and the truth of the Christian message, this precipitated the economic, political, social, and religious destruction of Aboriginal communities. These are themes that William Apess denounces in his own writings, not despite his Christian faith, but rather because of it.

In *The Tutor'd Mind*, Bernd C. Peyer advocates for an ethnohistorical approach to reading Aboriginal writings. Peyer follows Frantz Fanon's periodization of colonial literature: the first is the period in which the colonized prove they have imbibed the colonizing cultural values; the second is the period in which they recognize their difference and write about the past of their people as pristine and innocent; and the third is the period in which they call their people to stand up and rectify their oppressed situation.<sup>84</sup> He examines the relationship between colonial and Aboriginal languages at different periods of the colonization process; once the balance of power shifts decidedly in favour of the colonizing people, their colonial language will be more firmly entrenched and accelerate cultural alienation.<sup>85</sup> William Apess' writing suggests that he is in between the second and third periods.

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<sup>82</sup> George E. Tinker, *Missionary Conquest: The Gospel and Native American Cultural Genocide* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993), 4.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>84</sup> Bernd Peyer, *The Tutor'd Mind: Indian Missionary-Writers in Antebellum America* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 18.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

Beside a few government documents, most of what is known about William Apess comes from his own ethnographic writings.<sup>86</sup> He was born to parents of the Pequot people, a group that was actively involved in a war against the early Puritans of New England which was disastrous for both sides during in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century. These Puritans considered their ultimate victory as divine favour and tried to prevent the Pequots from ever becoming a regional power again, even going so far as to ban the use of their very name “so that the name of the Pequits (as of *Amaleck*) [was] blotted out from under heaven, there being not one that [was], or, (at least) dare call himselfe a Pequit.”<sup>87</sup> The English settlers destroyed Pequot communities, killed their townspeople, sold many into slavery, and resettled those who remained among Aboriginal groups allied with the colonists. Despite this harsh treatment, in Apess’ time there were still two small Pequot reserves in Connecticut.<sup>88</sup>

Apess grew up poor and disconnected from his family. His parents separated in 1801 when he was about three, so he went to live with his grandmother. When he was still a child, she beat him while drunk, provoking authorities to bind him out<sup>89</sup> to a neighbouring white family. Though Apess loved his grandmother, he was convinced that if he had stayed in her household she would have eventually killed him.<sup>90</sup> However, Apess does not blame his grandmother for the abuse; in his mind the white society bears the responsibility for creating the social conditions that led this behaviour.

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<sup>86</sup> Bernd Peyer, *The Tutor’d Mind: Indian Missionary-Writers in Antebellum America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997), 117.

<sup>87</sup> *New Englands First Fruits: In Respect, First of the Conversion of Some, Conviction of Divers, Preparation of Sundry of the Indians 2. Of the Progresse of Learning, in the Colledge at Cambridge in Massachusetts Bay. With Divers Other Speciall Matters Concerning That Country.* (London: Printed by R.O. and G.D. for Henry Overton, 1643), 37-38.

<sup>88</sup> Barry O’Connell, ed., in William Apess, *On Our Own Ground: The Complete Writings of William Apess, a Pequot* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1992), xxv-xxvi.

<sup>89</sup> “Binding out” was a common practice at the time. Orphans, the indigent, or otherwise unsettled minors were sent to live and work for a family, who, in turn, would care for the child and see to it that he received a decent education until age 18. It is a practice akin to indentured servitude.

<sup>90</sup> William Apess, *The Experience of Five Christian Indians, in On Our Own Ground*, 121.

Apess was very fond of his first foster family, the Furmans. At their estate, his mind began to turn toward spiritual matters after seeing the “people of God”<sup>91</sup> gather in the woods behind his house. When Apess was six, Mrs. Furman took him to a graveyard to show him the graves of children even younger than himself so that he could appreciate the importance of preparing for the hereafter as soon as possible. When he was eight, he attended an outdoor gathering of a sect<sup>92</sup> and became enchanted by a preacher who “spoke much of the *eternal happiness* of the righteous and the *everlasting misery* of the ungodly, and his observations sunk with awful weight upon [his] mind.”<sup>93</sup> However, nobody really believed that he had a genuine interest in spiritual matters since he was a child and Aboriginal. If he had been white, Apess was convinced, proper education and instruction would have been provided upon his earliest expression of interest. Despite his new anxiety about the afterlife, he fell under the influence of some mischievous children and ultimately ran away from home. This misbehaviour convinced the Furmans to sell him to another family.<sup>94</sup>

Had he been white “there could not have been a place good enough for [him].”<sup>95</sup> Instead, “the poor Indian boy,” as he often referred to himself, was sold again. At age 10, he went to live with the Hillhouses, a strict Presbyterian family who did not show the love and affection that Apess craved as a boy. Then he lived with the Williams family a year and a half later, who seemed to have wanted a servant rather than a son, but Apess defiantly refuses to call his superiors “master.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>91</sup> This is possibly a reference to Methodists or the Disciples of Christ, as Barry O’Connell’s footnote says.

<sup>92</sup> Barry O’Connell’s footnotes states that this was probably a group of dissenting Methodists who withdrew from the main body due to disagreements over the power of bishops, or the Christian Church, which split from the Presbyterians and changed their name to the Disciples of Christ after 1832.

<sup>93</sup> Apess, *A Son of the Forest*, 12.

<sup>94</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-11.

<sup>95</sup> Apess, *The Experiences*, 123.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

At age 15, American soldiers lured Apess into the army with alcohol during the War of 1812. After participating in several botched invasions of Montreal and near the Lake Champlain region, he left the army in 1815, but spent an additional year in British North America travelling around Upper Canada taking on jobs when he could. He interacted with Canadian Aboriginal groups, which cemented a sense of ethnic pride in him; unfortunately, it also cemented his addiction to alcohol, with which he would struggle for the rest of his life. He returned to New England and began his work preaching—sometimes illegally since he would still not be ordained by the Methodist church for some time.

Apess' world was swept up in the religious revival of the Second Great Awakening (1790s—1840s). The so-called “praying circles” in the wilderness attracted crowds eager to experience the Holy Spirit and confess their sins before their community before God. Dissenting evangelical denominations challenged the older mainline churches with their more spontaneous and outward expressions of faith. The Methodists and Baptists were the principal benefactors of this movement, while older denominations like the Presbyterian, Episcopal, Lutheran, and Congregational churches saw relatively meagre growth; American Catholicism was on the defensive, trying to keep its congregants from joining this evangelical awakening.

The Methodists drew their ranks from the lower echelons of society. New members were usually poor white Americans, African-Americans (both freedmen and slaves), and Aboriginals. Drawing on the example of their founder, John Wesley, the church sent out itinerant preachers called “circuit riders” who were normally men of humble means, as well. These preachers were typically charismatic orators and possessed the religious zeal necessary to attract large crowds—and Apess was perfect for this work. Just like the people Methodists prided themselves in

attracting, many critics considered the denomination itself as low, undignified, emotional, as compared to the more conservative, reserved, and rational-minded mainline denominations.

It is also important to understand what this Second Great Awakening was reacting against. The Enlightenment of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, which placed great value on scientific and rational thought, was seen by some to be spiritually unsatisfying and emotionally cold. Enthusiastic Christians of the Awakening were critical of the somewhat detached and mechanical theology of Deism and its “clock-maker God,” who refrained from direct intervention in the material world. Rather, God’s activities in this world were obvious to those who experienced the Holy Spirit and remained convinced of both biblical and contemporary miracles. The wilderness in the Romantic Era (19<sup>th</sup> century) became a place of respite to experience God’s majesty, and this connection between nature and the divine helped Apess associate Aboriginal people as children of God rather than wild brutes.

Bernd C. Peyer has concluded that once a colonial language (e.g., English) becomes the dominant medium of communication in a region, “the unidirectional flow of communication will tend to accelerate cultural alienation”<sup>97</sup> of the colonized groups. Furthermore, Protestant education, including the teaching of literacy, was intended “to legitimize the appropriation of Indian lands.”<sup>98</sup> This is something that Apess recognized and rejected; but rather than reject all things European, as some Aboriginal leaders have done, Apess opted to utilize these institutions and turn them back on the colonizer. This was what Apess’ was truly passionate about: proving, using the earliest accounts of European writers as evidence, that what American society believed about Aboriginal society was completely wrong, and the celebratory myths that Europeans told themselves about the benevolence of their white ancestors was equally false.

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<sup>97</sup> Peyer, 7.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

Apess was well aware of the distasteful manner in which some of the contemporary historians treated Aboriginal people. The injustices of the European historians were a big part of the problem:

It has been the lot of the unfortunate aborigines of this country, to be doubly wronged by the white man—first, driven from their native soil by the sword of the invader, and then darkly slandered by the pen of the historian. The former has treated them like beasts of the forest; the latter has written volumes to justify him in his outrages. The former found it easier to exterminate than to civilize; the latter to abuse than to discriminate.<sup>99</sup>

Conscious of the damage that has been done to Aboriginal people by the pen of the historian, Apess relied on his writing skill and passion to justify Aboriginal people, bringing them into the literary sphere.

Apess utilizes some of the more sympathetic European historians to his aid. He dedicated a page-long quote from John Wynne's *History of the British Empire in America* (which he had quoted from Elias Boudinot) that outlined the barbarity and hypocrisy of the early settlers of New England; Apess declared, "After reading the above, I presume that no person will doubt that great injustice has been done to the Indians, and I also think that no liberal mind will say that they are the *only* savages."<sup>100</sup> Similar to Guaman Poma, William Apess liked to use European histories to point out how the Europeans' ancestors were not more virtuous or civilized than his own. He challenged the notion that Europeans were on a civilizing mission.

While the arrival of the European Christians facilitated the spread of the Gospel message to the Aboriginal groups, Europeans should feel no sense of moral or cultural superiority. Apess pointed out incidents whereby Europeans were once the most wretched and backward group on earth, and if Aboriginal people had Europeans to thank for bringing the Christian message, then Europeans had to pay similar homage to the Jews, who brought the message of God and Jesus to

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<sup>99</sup> *A Son*, 61.

<sup>100</sup> *A Son*, 59; emphasis in original text.



Europe, only after harsh persecutions. The point was appealing to Apess because of what he and others believed about the Semitic origins of the Aboriginal people of the Americas. Apess also alluded to the Christian nature of Aboriginal people even before European contact—also not unlike Guaman Poma.

It should be pointed out that Apess was the first Aboriginal to write an autobiography in the United States. Previously, there were only biographies written by Europeans, translating and/or transcribing their stories for them. A large portion of Apess' autobiography is dedicated not to his life, but to various Aboriginal societies of North America. Apess linked Aboriginal groups—and by extension, himself—to Old World customs and beliefs, particularly Judeo-Christian culture and history. The cultural distance between European Christian culture and Aboriginal culture was shrunk to an amazing degree as a result, challenging theories of racial difference.

As Apess did elsewhere, he compared Aboriginals to European cultural and religious systems in order to suggest that they are not as different as some believe. After outlining some of the beliefs of various Aboriginal groups from across the American Continent, he then implied, following the writer and politician Elias Boudinot (1740—1821), that a lost tribe from Israel travelled through Asia, to the Kamchatka Peninsula, and onto the American Continent, bringing with them their Semitic beliefs and customs. Apess described, with the help of European writers who travelled among Aboriginal groups, the various religious, linguistic, and political similarities between the Jews and Aboriginals. These points are persuasive, especially so because they represented contemporary theories and drew upon early European travellers, who were the first to observe and write about these Aboriginal groups.

Using the works of European authors for his own ends speaks to Apess' ability to recognize the value in the histories and theories of highly educated men for the purposes of social reform. The final pages of *A Son of the Forest* were dedicated to proving the cultural, linguistic, religious, and political likeness to Jews of Aboriginal societies from Florida to the Bering Strait. It also served to convince the reader that true Christian virtue was alive and well in the hearts of Aboriginal people. Apess cites numerous European travellers and writers, from Father Charlevoix writing about the Iroquois and Huron to Alexander Mackenzie's writing about the Dogrib in Alaska.

Apess continued by mentioning the lofty and praiseworthy terms with which early European explorers and missionaries, of various nationalities, used to describe them. John Smith of Virginia stated that "They appeared to be fulfilling the scriptures, beyond many of those who profess to believe them, in that of taking no thought for tomorrow, but in living in love, peace, and friendship, without disputes."<sup>101</sup> In this way, Apess set up contemporary historians as racist revisionists, while he went back to the sources to correct the historical record.

If the historians could make successive generations feel at ease about the displacement and destruction of Aboriginal societies at the hands of the white colonizers, then Apess' use of scholarship could help to disturb that complacency by way of proving their precepts false. Furthermore, rather than writing a chronicle of injustices visited upon the Aboriginal groups, Apess mimicked the rhetorical style of white authors to make his writing come alive and inspire a reaction in the hearts of his audience. Apess also mimicked biblical narratives. In Protestant, and especially evangelical, Christianity, the biblical stories are not merely a chronicle of events past, but rather they a living and recurring template of human history. As such, Apess *lived* the

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<sup>101</sup> John Smith, quoted in *A Son of the Forest*, 90.

stories of the Bible. When he felt the Holy Ghost call him to preach he was very reluctant to do so because he was “nothing but a poor ignorant Indian” and nobody would listen to him.<sup>102</sup> Like Jesus’ exhortation to God in the Garden of Gethsemane, Apess “began to pray more frequently to God to let this ‘cup pass from [him].”<sup>103</sup> Biblical stories provided a framework that gave meaning and form to his experiences and this was bound to his identity as an Aboriginal.

Apess used a number of literary models to make his case. Dwelling on Romantic literature about innocent Aboriginals who lived in harmony with nature, he made a case for the noble spirits of Aboriginal people to counter the narratives of Aboriginal barbarity. He used European travel narratives and early histories to prove his point that Europeans were far more often the transgressors in early Native-Newcomer relations. The Bible provided a framework in which he could make his life’s story intelligible and it provided a common moral framework to make his case.

Aside from exposing the unchristian behaviour of the colonists, Apess makes his case about the injustice of contemporary society disproving another common belief of his time. This is ostensibly to destroy common notions about the racial superiority of the whites, since if the people of God (the Jews), including Jesus, were not white, there is little to justify this theory that God made the white people as a race apart. In *A Son of the Forest*, Apess mentions that the Aboriginals are the only people in the country who retain the complexion of Adam, the first human.<sup>104</sup> This stems from his belief, which was somewhat popular at the time, that the Aboriginal groups of the Americas were descended from the ten lost tribes of Israel, which leads Apess to conclude, “My image is of God; I am not a beast.”<sup>105</sup> This statement stems from his

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<sup>102</sup> Apess, *A Son of the Forest*, 44.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, 44; see Matthew 26:39.

<sup>104</sup> Apess, *A Son of the Forest*, 10.

<sup>105</sup> Apess, *Eulogy on King Philip*, 278.

reinterpretation of history that included Aboriginals into the fold of Judeo-Christian history. In *The Indians: The Ten Lost Tribes*, Apess connects his belief on race with the moral implications of indigeneity.

Apess drew many parallels between the suffering of Aboriginal people and the suffering of the Jews. He believed this mistreatment would be punished when God's plan was fulfilled, which was already happening in Apess' day since the Aboriginals (Jews) were converting to Christianity, a sign of the End of Days: "The ancient chosen people shall then be no more a scorn and a hissing among men. They have all along been precious in the sight of God . . . . Woe, woe to the nations who tread on the discarded jewels of Israel."<sup>106</sup> Then, Apess continued to include Aboriginals in the category of Jews due to the prevailing belief on the time regarding the origins of the Aboriginal groups:

If, as many eminent men with apparently high presumption, if not unquestionable evidence, believe, the Indians of the American continent are a part of the long lost ten tribes of Israel, have not the great American nation reason to fear the swift judgments of heaven in them for nameless cruelties, extortions, and exterminations inflicted upon the poor natives of the forest?<sup>107</sup>

This was intended to strike the fear of God in the hearts of those among white society who lie, swindle, kill, and marginalize Aboriginal groups.

This connection between the lost tribe of Israel and the Aboriginals of the American Continent concerned their language, appearance, and customs. Apess quoted William Penn when, writing to a friend in England, he stated that he considered them Jewish in appearance and that their women wore jewelry and trinkets on their person; Apess goes on the quote a passage from the Book of Isaiah<sup>108</sup> that seemed to confirm that this was the style of dress among the

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<sup>106</sup> Apess, *The Increase of the Kingdom of Christ*, 106.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> Isaiah 3:18.

ancient Jews.<sup>109</sup> Again, Apess relied not on Aboriginal-made theories about race, but on the contemporary scholarship of European scholars and writers, as well as the Bible.

This connection between Aboriginal and Jewish people was powerful when combined with another conclusion by Apess. Contrary to the common assumption at the time, Jesus was not white, and even if he were, it would not matter since he judged people by their hearts, not their skin colour. Apess drove this point home with a series of rhetorical questions:

Did you ever hear or read of Christ teaching his disciples that they ought to despise one because his skin was different from theirs? Jesus Christ being a Jew, and those of his Apostles certainly were not whites—and did not he who completed the plan of salvation complete it for the whites as well as the Jews, and others? And were not the whites the most degraded people on the earth at that time? And none were more so because they sacrificed their children to dumb idols! And you know as well as I do that you are not indebted to a principle beneath a white skin for your religious services but to a colored one.<sup>110</sup>

Later on, Apess pointed out that in the days of Jesus, all except the Jews were considered heathens. Again, Apess applied his question and answer construction to drive his point home beyond all reasonable doubt: “But you may ask: Who are the children of God? Perhaps you will say, none but white. If so, they word of the Lord is not true.”<sup>111</sup> This was to make it more difficult to argue for the racial particularity of whites while also proclaiming the truth of the Christianity. He put the white, Christian reader in a position of having to choose between belief in the Bible or in European theories of racial superiority.

Aside from skin colour, Apess also attacked the notion that Aboriginal societies were more immoral than European societies. Although Apess is conscious of the brutality that characterized Aboriginal warfare, recognizing that there was “a strong temptation to the victor to be merciless,” he noted that this was not out of cruelty or malice, but out of self-preservation, since the destruction of a few soldiers would incapacitate an otherwise dangerous and hostile

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<sup>109</sup> *A Son of the Forest*, 74-79.

<sup>110</sup> *A Son*, 158.

<sup>111</sup> *A Son*, 159.

nation. Moreover, the survivors of the defeated nation were adopted into the victorious one and treated as their own.<sup>112</sup> But, since the introduction of Europeans into the land, the treatment of the conquered changed for the worse. Killing became more about vengeance rather than security because whites had “set them an example of violence, by burning their villages, and laying waste to their slender means of subsistence; and then wonder that savages will not show moderation and magnanimity towards men, who have left them nothing but mere existence and wretchedness.” However, this was Apess’ own take on the matter, and as he pointed out elsewhere, the sins of Aboriginal society were largely caused by emulating Europeans and their unchristian behaviour: “The inhumanity of the Indians towards their prisoners has been heightened since the intrusion of the whites.”<sup>113</sup> It was the Europeans who truly taught the Aboriginal groups what violence was.

After explaining his conversion and travel, spreading the Gospel throughout New England, Apess ended his autobiography. After much struggle with sin, improvement, and more regressions, he finally ended with his assurance of salvation through Jesus Christ. This had a transformative power:

I can truly say that the spirit of prejudice is no longer an inmate of my bosom; the sun of consolation has warmed my heart, and by the grace of God assisting me, I am determined to sound the trump of the Gospel—to call upon men to turn and live.

Look, brethren, at the natives of the forest—they come, notwithstanding you call them ‘*savage*,’ ... and will occupy seats in the kingdom of heaven before you.<sup>114</sup>

The narrative ends as many evangelical confessions do. Apess made the journey from sin to salvation. But Apess added his opinion that the Aboriginals are surpassing the Europeans due to the latter’s misdeeds.

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<sup>112</sup> *A Son*, 64.

<sup>113</sup> *A Son*, 64.

<sup>114</sup> *A Son*, 51.

All of William Apess' surviving works attest to his conviction that the American histories of Aboriginal people have been skewed to make white society look civilized and morally superior compared to Aboriginal ones. In particular, Apess sought to discredit the overly celebratory histories of the United States with his *Eulogy on King Philip*. This work was originally an address given twice in January of 1836 to commemorate the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the death of Metacomb (King Philip), who led the Wampanoag<sup>115</sup> into war against the Puritans after his father had served as their crucial ally. In the introduction to *On Our Own Ground*, a collection of Apess' works, Barry O'Connell points out that the *Eulogy on King Philip* was a response to a series of speeches by Daniel Webster from 1820 to 1826. Webster mythologized America's Founding Fathers to the point of hagiography and praised the first settlers as brave and virtuous pilgrims. Apess likewise praised King Philip as a kind of forgotten founding father, using the same rhetoric against the pilgrims that Webster used against Aboriginal people.<sup>116</sup>

Apess portrayed how supposedly upright, Christian men proved they were nothing but treacherous opportunists. Backstabbing, murder, cruelty, theft, and no small portion of hypocrisy were exhibited by New England's founding colonists in Apess' *Eulogy*, which was in sharp contrast to the celebratory histories of New England's first colonists by white historians. These examples from history, combined with his powerful rhetoric of Christian indignation, offered a damning criticism of the American claim to divine favour and their "civilizing" mission among the Aboriginal people, who did nothing to merit such mistreatment; on the contrary, Aboriginals seemed to have offered their aid to the white colonists whenever it was asked of them and complied with their every request. With this misguided notion of the whites' right to the land thoroughly quashed Apess explained how a true national hero behaved.

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<sup>115</sup> Philip's father was the sachem of the Pokanoket; when Philip rose to power he united this group with other to make up the Wampanoag Confederation.

<sup>116</sup> Barry O'Connell, xx-xxi.

He began with the King Philip's father, the Pokanoket sachem Massasoit. Apess reminded the readers of a treaty agreed upon by Massasoit and the early Puritans, which stated that anyone who violated the peace between the two groups was to be brought to justice; this was for their mutual protection as both groups had enemies in the region. When an Aboriginal man (which Barry O'Connell's footnote identifies as Squanto) conspired to murder Massasoit, the pilgrims refused to give him up simply because he was useful to them.<sup>117</sup> Instead of waging what would have been a just war according to the agreement, and which would have been a quick victory for Massasoit if we are to believe Apess, the venerable chief forgave this breach of contract, but there was no reciprocity for this mercy. Apess then pointed out that Massasoit was respected by the Pilgrims only insofar as he had the power to destroy them: ". . . if it had been in the power of the pilgrims, they would have butchered them out and out, notwithstanding all the piety they professed."<sup>118</sup> King Philip led according to honour and forgiveness, while the scheming colonists pretended to be allies only so long as it suited their ultimate goal of expansion and conquest.

This lengthy list of injustices visited upon the Aborigines was "to show that Philip and all the Indians generally felt indignantly toward whites, whereby they were more easily allied together by Philip, their king and emperor."<sup>119</sup> This righteous indignation toward the pilgrims had finally convinced King Philip and his followers that something drastic had to be done. This mighty king, "the greatest man that ever lived upon the American shores,"<sup>120</sup> came to power after his father's death as well as the death of his brother at the hands of Governor Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. As the true nature of the Europeans was becoming more and more

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<sup>117</sup> Apess, *Eulogy of King Philip*, in *On Our Own Ground*, 283; the note identified the conspirator as Squanto.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 283.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 289.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 290.



apparent to the men and women that Philip led, war became inevitable if they were to survive as a people.

King Philip made himself known as a wise, tactical, and strong leader. When King Philip and his men had to retreat across the Connecticut River, fleeing from a much larger army of Puritans, he only lost 14 men; Apess contrasted this with George Washington's flight across the Delaware River, which he considered relatively disastrous and sloppy because while Washington "was assisted by all the knowledge that art and science could give, together with all the instruments of defense and edged tools to prepare rafts and the like helps for safety across the river, Philip was naked as to any of these things, possessing only what nature, his mother, had bestowed upon him; and yet makes his escape with equal praise."<sup>121</sup> Even so, the pursuing Puritans would not have been able to achieve even this if it had not been for the Aboriginal allies they duped with promises of equality—and even this promise was not fulfilled by the Puritans. Again, as happens so often throughout Apess' writings, the colonists were able to succeed only with Aboriginal aid, which they secured with false promises.

King Philip's strategic prowess was also evident in his foresight. When Plymouth, Connecticut, and Massachusetts combined their armies to pursue him in the winter of 1675, Philip was able to find a defensible position and construct quality housing with palisades, wagons, and barrels of corn lining the perimeter to make the fort bulletproof; the pilgrim army, by contrast, endured terrible suffering from exposure to winter and lack of food. Again, the Puritans were only able to succeed with Aboriginal aid, which they again secured with lies. Despite his leadership skills, "Philip, an independent sovereign of the Pequots, who disdained to

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 297.

submit, but died fighting at the head of his men, had his head cut off carried on a pole with great rejoicings, to New Plymouth ....”<sup>122</sup>

Although Philip was a mighty leader, Apess pointed out that he was also compassionate, not only toward his allies, but toward his enemies as well. When his men captured a European teenager who intended to marry an Aboriginal woman, Philip let him go out of mercy; by contrast, when the pilgrims captured a lone elderly Aboriginal man, they chopped off his arms and then decapitated him.<sup>123</sup> When King Philip’s men lacked money, he took his own coat, which was clad with “Indian money,”<sup>124</sup> and cut it into pieces to distribute among his men “so that it cheered their hearts still to persevere to maintain their rights and expel their enemies.”<sup>125</sup> Here again, Apess made King Philip’s greatness known by comparing him to the most celebrated white leader, George Washington: While Philip’s men were extremely happy with what they received as recompense for their service, since it had great value among them and among other nations, Continental soldiers in the American Revolution were paid with virtually worthless currency. Apess stated that King Philip’s act of generosity “outweighs all the princes and emperors in the world.”<sup>126</sup> Apess believed that King Philip was among the greatest leaders in American history, largely thanks to the compassion that he showed toward his allies as well as his enemies.

According to Apess, the greatest fault of the Aboriginals was their trusting and kind nature. He commented on the tactics of one Captain Church to illuminate this: “Church only owes his exploits to the honesty of the Indians, who told the truth, and to his own deceptive heart

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<sup>122</sup> Apess, *A Son of the Forest*, 58.

<sup>123</sup> Apess, *Eulogy*, 297.

<sup>124</sup> Apess says it was clad with *mampampeag*, which is no doubt his spelling of *wampumpeag* or *wampum*, which were stringed shells used as a medium of exchange among eastern North American Aboriginal nations.

<sup>125</sup> Apess, *Eulogy*, 297.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*

in duping them.”<sup>127</sup> These deceptive actions were made all the more so, in Apess’ eyes, because they claimed themselves to be virtuous Christians. Those professed Christians who first settled New England acted with more barbarity than they accused the Aborigines of, and this was no basis for a Christian nation. The national myth that was being perpetuated was a lie that Apess worked hard to expose.

Apess’ narrative countered some of the other Christian interpretations of history. In 1835, one year before Apess’ *Eulogy of King Philip* address, a reverend stated the following in a New York publication:

Let any man look at this settlement, and reflect what it was three years ago, and his heart can but kindle up while he exclaims, “what God has wrought!” the savage has left the ground for civilized man. . . . He [God] gathered out the stones thereof, and drove the red Canaanites from trampling it down, or in any way hindering its increase.<sup>128</sup>

This spoke to the Christian interpretation that Apess was combating so passionately. To Apess, the Aborigines were not analogous to the Canaanites that the Jews destroyed by God’s command, but rather to the Jews; if anything, the Europeans, as a group that drove Aborigines off their land, were the ones who went against God’s plan.

Unfortunately, similar to Guaman Poma, the story of William Apess ends in obscurity. He did not realize his goals of rebuilding the reputation of Aboriginal people in his country. Nevertheless, Apess deserves praise for being the first Aboriginal writer in what is now North America to compose an autobiography and for his brave condemnation of the injustices of American society. He was also well versed in European histories and travel writings, which he utilized to great effect.

His works of history, had they gained traction among the public, would no doubt have done much to challenge the narrative of American history that was becoming common at that

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid., 300.

<sup>128</sup> Rev. Nahum Gold, *New York Evangelist*, 1 August 1835, quoted in *Eulogy*, 287.

time. This would have been a very uncomfortable realization to Americans who were quick to accept the celebratory histories that glorified the first settlers of New England and the greatness of George Washington. Apess made a powerful argument that the foundations of the United States were sown in treachery and sin, not righteousness and divine favour. They had better reason to thank the devil for the success of their nation rather than God in Apess' retelling. In this respect, William Apess fits between Frantz Fanon's second and third periodization of colonized writing; Apess did use writing to critique the injustices of European society, but he did not go as far as to advocate complete reorganization of the society in accordance with indigenous and pre-European lines. The aspects of colonial society that Apess felt had redemptive value need not be dismantled. Apess was not advocating for a return to completely pre-Contact society, but rather a readjustment of his own society so that Europeans and Aboriginals could live as they were meant to live, free of prejudice and domination of one over the other.

His strong evangelical background made it possible for him to make powerful arguments against the displacement and marginalization of Aboriginal people. It further allowed him a model for virtuous behaviour on which to base his representations of Aboriginal society and leaders such as King Philip. Methodism applied new value to the outcasts of society—and who could have been more disenfranchised in 19<sup>th</sup>-century United States than the Aboriginal groups who were dying *en masse* from disease, being displaced from their land by government sanction, and who were thought to be racially inferior? The social context of the Second Great Awakening provided fertile ground to spread his message.

What really distinguishes Apess is his expert control of the written word. Utilizing evangelical moral precepts, Apess' pen could be venomous to those who earned his displeasure, while he handles the disenfranchised with redemptive praise. Normally, Apess set up his

narrative structure in such a way that no rational thinker, if claiming to be Christian, could disagree with his conclusions. This is probably a skill he developed in his capacity as a missionary and reader of Methodist books. European-Americans would have to blush in shame at the false and detrimental accusations that had been hurled at Aboriginal society by hate-mongers and historians.

Similar to Guaman Poma, William Apess' identification with the Aboriginal people of the American Continent was not hindered because of his Christian faith. While Apess did not speak an indigenous language, and did not grow up in Aboriginal households for the majority of his childhood, he did feel completely justified in speaking as an Aboriginal man and for Aboriginal people. Physical traits play a big role in his identification as an Aboriginal. Even if he could speak, write and worship like the members of the white society that surrounded him, or even better, his darker skin colour ensured that we would never attain equal status with them. Mostly, as he says, his skill with language and knowledge of Christian teachings made him an curious anomaly; he mentions how people would come from far and wide to hear him speak simply because he was an Aboriginal, rather than for his message. He also did not hesitate to use any weapons in his arsenal to get his message across, whether it be writing, speaking, research, or appeals to the Bible. But it was precisely his Christianity that caused him to identify more proudly as an Aboriginal man and to be able to recognize the justice in Aboriginal societies. He was descended from God's people, who go through tremendous hardships in the Bible, and Aboriginal people certainly suffered greatly at the hands of their colonizers. His faith ensured that he could make intelligible the suffering of Aboriginal people and exalt them as the true bearers of virtue, especially when contrasted with the immorality of the Europeans.

Similar to Guaman Poma, William Apess believed that Aborigines were inheritors of the Judeo-Christian customs, which were brought to the New World when they crossed the Bering Strait. Therefore, true authenticity in Apess' time would have meant a return to Semitic practices and customs, strengthening the link with the Judeo-Christian culture of the Europeans. Due to Apess' place in colonial time, he was able to recognize the fallacies and outright lies embedded within Europeans' conquest and civilization discourses. To Apess, to become more authentic would have meant behaving more in line with Judeo-Christian customs, not abandoning all traces for pre-European religion. Christian and Aboriginal—the two categories were largely one in the same for Apess.

## Captain John Swalis

Captain John (1810-1908) had a relationship with the incoming colonial regime that was quite different than the other two case studies for a number of reasons. First, the incoming European society was not as established compared to those in the worlds that Guaman Poma and William Apress inhabited. Secondly, neither an Aboriginal nor a European language was the principal means of communication; Chinook Trade Jargon was used in this region because of the numerous mutually unintelligible languages spoken, and remained the primary language of intercultural communication throughout most of Captain John's life. Thirdly, Captain John left very little written documentation. Nevertheless, despite being illiterate and therefore unable to read and dialogue with European works of history, religion, and politics, Captain John was very successful at realizing his goal of escaping poverty and becoming a chief, a position which he held from the mid-1800s until his death in 1908.<sup>129</sup>

Captain John's motivations and actions differ to a large degree from those of Guaman Poma and William Apress. His example is useful for those areas that are common between Captain John and the other case studies. However, his is mostly useful as an oppositional example to help illuminate the kinds of decisions an Aboriginal intermediary in colonial society had to make at various stages of the colonization process, though there are some interesting similarities between him and Guaman Poma. Since Captain John lived as the first institutions of a colonial state were entrenching themselves, Captain John's experience in colonial society was quite distinct. This does not mean that Captain John was necessarily disadvantaged (actually far from it), but rather he had a much different perspective than Aboriginal subjects who had the benefit of deeper hindsight.

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<sup>129</sup> Tara Kelly, *History of Soowahlie: Echoes of the Past* (2005), 6.

The principal language of the Coast Salish people of the Fraser River Valley was Halq'eméylem by the time of Captain John's birth. The principal trading language of the region was a pidgin called Chinook Jargon, which was widely used in the 19<sup>th</sup> century by Europeans and Aboriginals from Oregon to the Alaskan panhandle. This trade language contained 700 words, which were borrowed from the languages of the groups who used it and co-created it, including Halq'eméylem, Nookta, Chinook,<sup>130</sup> English, French, and Spanish. In the 1800s, European fur traders helped spread Chinook Jargon to the groups with which they conducted business.<sup>131</sup> John Lutz explains that this pidgin trade language inevitably produced ambiguity and confusion between speakers and interpreters: "From 1778 to the early twentieth century, virtually every exchange between Northwest Coast Aboriginal People and immigrants — be it to do with religion, the law, work, barter, sex, or love — was consummated in a language whose very construction guaranteed misunderstandings."<sup>132</sup> This meant that much could be lost in the process of converting Chinook Jargon into English and into written text, since the meaning of words often depended on gestures and context.

The necessity of Chinook Jargon for communication between Captain John and clergymen created a common ground. The way a foreign language system is understood will be influenced by the interpretive mechanisms of the mother tongue. This leads one to dialogue with the other based on what the speaker thinks is the horizon of understanding that they share. Mikhail Bakhtin's work on dialogism reminds us that even in writing, communication is a dialectical relationship. There is no guarantee that information can be perfectly understood as

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<sup>130</sup> Here I am referring to the language of the Chinook people of Oregon, which is distinct from Chinook Jargon, though it did influence it.

<sup>131</sup> Bernd C. Peyer, *The Tutor'd Mind: Indian Missionary-Writers in Antebellum America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1997); John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), preface.

<sup>132</sup> John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), xi-xii.



intended by the speaker, and how something is said is dependent on the context of the intended audience.

Linguistic theories of poststructuralism have suggested the immense power of language for human conceptualization and understanding—for *being* in the world. Important postcolonial writers like Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o proposed that a people are defined by language, and the spread of English in the colonies acted as a "cultural bomb" that destroyed a people's pre-colonial cultural identity. This is something that William Apess had to come to terms with, as well as Guaman Poma to a lesser extent, but not Captain John.

Captain John communicated to his white audience in the Epworth League meeting at Coqualeetza residential school in Chinook Jargon. Rather than speaking out against European society in general, or against a European monarch, Captain John was addressing a group of Chilliwack Methodists to discuss his relationship with Christ and how it changed his life. This narrative, which must be understood in light of the interpretation that necessarily went into the translation, paints Captain John as a man who went through various transformations as he struggled with common contact zone problems, such as clashing belief systems, dramatic demographic changes, and addiction to alcohol.

Captain John's limited skills with English and literacy determined the dynamics of his relationship to European society. Given the relatively recent influx of European settlement in the region—compared to William Apess' New England, for example—English was still far from an entrenched language. Furthermore, the widespread use of Chinook Jargon ensured that English would not even attain the status of *lingua franca* in the region until after the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This is to say that Captain John was not forced to use a colonial language in order to communicate with

colonial settlers. This implies a certain balance of power radically different from other regions of the Americas, where European languages and settlement had deeper roots by the 19th century.

Nevertheless, Captain John's illiteracy restricted his understanding of the Bible message by prohibiting him from reading it himself. Although Guaman Poma, as a 17<sup>th</sup>-century Catholic, probably did not read the Bible for himself, he was acquainted with the catechisms and work on Catholic theology; and William Apress, as a Methodist preacher, was well versed in the Bible. Unlike other Aboriginal Christians, like William Apress in New England at the time who made great use of the Bible for his rhetorical defense of Aboriginal history and critique of colonial society, and Guaman Poma who used theologians and philosophers to aid his case, Captain John could not debate the settlers' or missionary's interpretation of the Bible in a meaningful way since he was dependent on them for interpretation and understanding.

Another problem with interpreting the role of illiteracy in Captain John's case is the suspicion that his signing away of most of Soowahlie's land base was due in part to some meddling on the part of the Methodist settlers or the government. Also, his inability to read the Bible for himself may have meant that he was unable to detangle its messages from the cultural influences of the ambitious European settlers, who had great interest in Soowahlie's reduction. But in order to fully understand the Captain John's world, some background information is necessary.

The Coast Salish communities of the Fraser River Valley were never united into a single political entity. Villages of wooden longhouses and pit houses provided shelter for the semi-nomadic groups, who were ruled by a leader called a *siy:am*. Status was based on wealth and rights to resources like berry patches and fishing spots. The passage of a resource from one person to another had to be made in ceremonial gatherings to guard against fraud. The most

prized resource sites were those next to swirling eddies on the riverbanks where the salmon rest as they battle their way upriver to spawn, making them easy to catch in great numbers.

The potlatch is the most famous ceremony of the Coast Salish. Though the Chinook Jargon term “potlatch” may refer to a number of ceremonies that Coast Salish groups performed, it involved aspiring members of society giving away or even destroying material goods in order to display wealth and status, which in turn would earn them prestige. Near the end of potlatch ceremonies, the host would select some in attendance to bear witness to the proceedings and inform their home communities of what transpired. This was the principal means of social mobility in Coast Salish societies since it announced important changes or reaffirmed social standing.<sup>133</sup> In short, the potlatch system was and is seen as a core axis of many Aboriginal cultures of British Columbia and the Pacific North West of the United States.

The principal documentary source relating to Captain John is a transcript of a speech he gave at age 88 at a Methodist association in Sardis called the Epworth League. The speech was delivered in Chinook Jargon, then translated into English and transcribed by Rev. W.H. Barraclough. Another notable source for information on Captain John is a short biography by amateur Chilliwack ethnography Oliver Wells, the son of early Chilliwack pioneer A.C. Wells, with whom Captain John was familiar. Both sources essentially tell the same story without any great divergence.

Captain John grew up of meagre means. The first hint of his rise in fame or fortune occurred when he visited Fort Langley as a teen. Because of his skills as a canoe man, he made his living ferrying Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) men, Royal Engineers, and gold prospectors across rivers and lakes. At first he refused the currency clients offered him, “much preferring an

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<sup>133</sup> Keith Carlson, *Power of Place, the Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 201-205.

old hat or shirt to the white mans [sic] coin.”<sup>134</sup> Eventually he and his wife recognized the value that Europeans attached to this form of currency, and in time was able to save \$2,000, twice what Gov. Douglas earned in a year.<sup>135</sup>

With the insatiable ambition of becoming a great leader, Captain John devoted his energies to storing enough wealth to host a great potlatch to extend his influence beyond his own village. “By giving a great ‘potlatch’, he distributed much of his wealth among his people and obtained the respect of other tribal representatives. . . . At the height of his popularity he was the recognized chief of all the tribes of the lower Fraser Valley.”<sup>136</sup> But while Captain John was making his way to the top of the Ts’elxweyeqw (Chilliwack, one of the Stó:lō ethnic groups) social ladder and living up to his epithet *Swalis* or “getting rich,” he was also struggling with an addiction to alcohol that he developed after a patron introduced him to whisky.<sup>137</sup>

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the incoming society forced the Coast Salish to adapt, especially as tens of thousands of immigrants flooded the region during the Cariboo Gold Rush, which began in 1858. European diseases were killing Aboriginal people at an alarming rate, while the number of European settlers was multiplying. In 1835, the Aboriginal population of British Columbia was approximately 70,000, but by 1901 that number had dropped to 25,488. During that same time period, the number of non-Natives went from a negligible 350 to 153,169.<sup>138</sup> In other words, within the span of 66 years, all within Captain John’s lifetime, Aboriginal people went from composing 99.9% to 14.3% of the British Columbian population. This did not only have demographic significance, but cultural, political, and economic ones as well.

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<sup>134</sup> Captain John.

<sup>135</sup> Captain John; Kelly, 9.

<sup>136</sup> Oliver Wells, “Captain John Su-a-lis,” in Fonds labelled “Reserves,” Coqualeetza Archives.

<sup>137</sup> Ibid., 8-9.

<sup>138</sup> Lutz, *Makúk*, 166.

Colonial Gov. James Douglas, worried about the impact of sudden waves of immigration to a region of such limited Western infrastructure, tried to protect the Aboriginal population by creating extensive reserves in 1864, which became known as the Douglas Reserves. Surveyor Lt. William McColl was told by Gov. Douglas, in front of Coast Salish leaders and two other colonial officials, to mark off as much land as the local groups wanted. When Frederick Seymour took over as Governor after Douglas' retirement, he made Joseph Trutch Commissioner of Lands and Works, which meant that he virtually managed the colony's relations with Aboriginal groups. Trutch abhorred the amount of land that was dedicated to Aboriginal reserves and reduced their acreage by 90% in 1868, claiming that the surveyors had misinterpreted Douglas' original instructions.<sup>139</sup> The Douglas reserve reduction continues to be a longstanding source of tensions between British Columbian First Nations and the provincial government.

In late 2012, Dr. Keith Carlson shared research discoveries during a presentation on the Douglas Reserve reductions to the Soowahlie Band. It appears that the infamous truncation of Soowahlie Indian Reserve from 4000 acres to just 690 was done with the consent of the acting chief, Captain John.<sup>140</sup> These new revelations surprised many in attendance, especially since there are such strong family connections to him on the reserve. Some were also distressed that it had the potential of damaging the reserve's ongoing court claim against the provincial government since it was not done "without the consent of the Indian Band," as many band members had previously believed.<sup>141</sup> Captain John's legitimacy as a community leader was also put under scrutiny since it appeared that he was simply appointed by the colonial government to

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<sup>139</sup> Carlson, *Power of Place, Problem of Time*, 173.

<sup>140</sup> Some sources say 600 acres. The map this is taken from is difficult to make out. In any case, the reserve was increase to its modern size (1140 acres) following British Columbia's entrance into Confederation in 1871.

<sup>141</sup> Kelly, 5.

the office of Chief of Soowahlie rather than the democratically elected candidate who claimed hereditary status and opposed the breakup.<sup>142</sup>

Much of this controversy relates to his relationship with Joseph Trutch and with the Methodist settlers in nearby Sardis. Before his entry into politics, Trutch staked his private fortune on his ability to build the Alexandra Suspension Bridge which would connect the Cariboo Road on either side of the Fraser River near Spuzzum. This bridge was essential for the movement of prospectors and resources between the Interior to the Coast, and provided much needed infrastructure. According to oral history provided to Keith Carlson by the late Soowahlie chief Andy Commodore, when Trutch's engineers discovered that they could not transport the cables necessary for construction, due to their bulkiness and the narrow road, his financial investment was in jeopardy. Captain John rallied his family and followers and had them take the cables off their spools, hoist them onto their shoulders, and walk them along the road to the construction site.<sup>143</sup> This bridge facilitated the entry of thousands of gold prospectors, not to mention the lucrative businesses that followed to sell them equipment, food, and lodgings. As a private investor, Trutch controlled tolls for seven years, earning him \$10,000 to \$20,000 per year.<sup>144</sup> Captain John enjoyed the spoils as well thanks to a subcontract.<sup>145</sup>

However, the relationship between Captain John and Joseph Trutch did not end there. When Trutch, in his authority as Chief Commissioner of Lands and Works, needed someone with local authority to consent to the Douglas Reserve reductions that were essential to his platform as a politician, he looked to Captain John for help. When Captain John failed to get elected by Soowahlie as chief (gaining only 5 of 24 votes), Trutch heeded the threats of 28

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<sup>142</sup> Carlson, *Power of Place*, 194-200.

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, 198-199.

<sup>144</sup> Robin Fisher, "TRUTCH, Sir JOSEPH WILLIAM," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed May 20, 2015.

<sup>145</sup> Carlson, *Power of Place.*, 199.

protesting white settlers in the area, who had already devoted time and resources to establishing their agricultural pretensions within Soowahlie's Douglas reserve. Trutch needed Captain John to serve as chief and consent to the truncation.<sup>146</sup> His actions seem to be very different from those of Guaman Poma and William Apress. A big part of his reasons for doing what he did had to do with British Columbia's place in colonial time and with the religious landscape, which was not only embroiled in struggles between Christian and indigenous faiths (like in Guaman Poma's world), but intra-Christian struggles as well (like in William Apress' world).

Christian missionaries—mostly Anglican, Methodist, and Catholic—came in to British Columbia to convert Aboriginal groups to their faith and steer them away from their indigenous religions. Intra-Christian sectarian or denominational rivalries complicated the religious environment even further. All of this contrasts sharply with the relationship that Aboriginal groups had with the Hudson Bay's Company (HBC), which dominated Aboriginal-European relationships in British Columbia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century; the HBC had little interest in influencing Aboriginal culture, so long as a favourable trading relationship continued. However, the newer immigrants who were interested in settling and farming had much more interest in influencing Aboriginal ways of thinking and in their land.

Captain John's fall into alcoholism as he was working as a canoe man unleashed a spiritual crisis. Like most Aboriginal people in the Chilliwack River Valley in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, he was Catholic and heeded the exhortations of his priest, who "gave him a crucifix and told him to wear this constantly and that this would save him from coming to grief from the effects of Intemperance and would ultimately save him from going down to hell when he died."<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Ibid., 198; See also the map with Captain John labelled as "Chief" in the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre's map room or pictured on page 196 of *The Power of Place* by Carlson.

<sup>147</sup> Captain John Swalis, "The Story of the conversion and subsequent experiences of Captain John as narrated by himself," trans. from Chinook by Rev. W.H. Barraclough (Sardis Epworth League, 30 March 1898).

Nevertheless, the destructive grip of alcohol remained as strong as ever. A.C. Wells and other Methodist settlers in Sardis convinced him to meet with a member of their clergy—an itinerant missionary name Rev. Crosby—who played a pivotal role in the transformation of Captain John from a follower of Catholicism, to an enthusiastic promoter of Methodism in the Lower Fraser Valley. However, the transformation came with social and political consequences.

The missionaries exploited the spiritual crisis in Captain John at a critical time. Desperate to cure himself of alcoholism, Captain John fell into a state of distress. Rev. Barraclough explained, “These contrary forces [Methodist and Catholic missionaries] caused Capt. John a great deal of trouble, and he felt very much worried for a long long time. He wanted to do what was right but halted as to which was the right thing to do and which the wrong.”<sup>148</sup> Finally, after much deliberation, he converted to Methodism at a camp meeting in Nanaimo when called by Rev. Crosby to speak for Christ:

He didn’t know what to say. He listened to the exhortations and explanations of Rev. Crosby and finally realized that in order to be a Christian he must give up all his old heathen customs and all his own bad habits, and everything else that was bad, and trust in God to save his from his sins, and try to live every day just as Jesus wanted him to live.<sup>149</sup>

This spontaneous conversion had a dramatic change in the mind of Captain John. He now shared a powerful link with the Methodist community.

Because there is such little documentary evidence on Captain John, it is useful to briefly look at other chiefs and how they reacted to Methodism. The Lekwungen of Vancouver Island, like Captain John, were particularly adept at taking full advantage of the capitalist economy that Europeans introduced. The very same Rev. Crosby, after convincing Lekwungen Chief Shee-at-Ston of Methodism’s superiority over the other faiths, pushed for European social organization, which included private households instead of multi-family lodges, monogamy instead of

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<sup>148</sup> Captain John., 5.

<sup>149</sup> Ibid., 6.



polygyny, abstaining from alcohol, and ceasing to practice spiritual rites considered non-Christian. After Shee-at-Ston converted, he quit his longhouse and unorthodox activities in favour of a private family residence and strict adherence to European practices.<sup>150</sup> Rev. Crosby was a persuasive and charismatic man who successfully spread the magnetic message of Methodism. If he could convince Chief Shee-at-Ston to reform his society based on European values like private property and monogamy, then it is not a stretch to believe that Captain John would have been likewise convinced to do the same in Soowahlie.

Captain John's conversion to Methodism certainly affected his relationships with his neighbours. As Rev. Barraclough stated, "his change of faith meant destruction of his prestige and popularity as a Chief among Chiefs."<sup>151</sup> Losing the allegiance of lesser chiefs was a great sacrifice for Captain John considering his lifelong dream of becoming a powerful leader. Furthermore, his relationship with his family and neighbours was strained by his attempted prohibition of indigenous practices on Soowahlie land. One such episode occurred when he tried to intervene in his mother's winter dance (*smilha*). Captain John was unable to withstand the powerful spirits and break her trance. Instead he was blasted backward when he tried to lay his hand on her and became entranced himself, dancing uncontrollably. According to his grandson, Andy Commodore, he never again tried to physically intervene in winter dances despite his conviction that they were not inspired by good forces.<sup>152</sup> Being Methodist when most of the Aboriginal population in the area was Catholic and/or practiced indigenous religious rites was alienating. Similarly, his new association with the European settler community via Methodism was another factor that put him in an uncomfortable position among Ts'elxweyeqw.

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<sup>150</sup> John Lutz, *Makúk*, 90-91.

<sup>151</sup> Oliver Wells, "Captain John Su-a-lis," in Fonds labelled "Reserves," Coqualeetza Archives, 2.

<sup>152</sup> Andy Commodore, interview with Keith Thor Carlson documented in *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 326, n. 39.

Religion profoundly influenced Captain John's ability to negotiate alliances. When he was Catholic, it appears he was able to keep the allegiance of his people and the surrounding groups, who accepted his authority following his grand potlatch. However, the Methodist settlers in the area preferred to deal with someone of their own religion and with similar social values, and this desire caused them to introduce Captain John to Rev. Crosby. After Captain John converted to Methodism, he seemed to have been able to navigate through the largely Protestant colonial system to his advantage, even though it may have damaged his relationship with the Catholic Aboriginal people that he led. Furthermore, his evangelical Protestantism seems to have inhibited him from accepting or even tolerating pre-Christian religious expressions, such as his mother's winter dance. It seems that Captain John's conversion to Methodism meant rejecting many things that could be construed according to evangelical minds as non-Christian, whereas some in his community felt at ease about being Christian while simultaneously practicing indigenous spiritual rites. Other than religion, history as conceived by the Stó:lō was another aspect of this story that deserves some investigation.

History is something that the Stó:lō took very seriously. There were very grave dangers for anyone who altered the meaning of sacred, myth-age stories (*sxwoxwiyam*), and there were consequences for the listeners. Therefore, it was of paramount importance to all parties to ensure the accurate transmission of oral histories. For non-sacred stories (*swlqwels*), there were also methods to ensure accurate transmission. In "Reflections on Indigenous History and Memory," Keith Carlson relates how Stó:lō communities have created a method of "oral footnoting" to bolster the authority of one's historical claims if the speaker was not present to witness the event; furthermore, if a dispute broke out over a person's historical claim, the two parties would have to find advocates of their version of history to make a case to two knowledgeable old men (called

*sxá:sls'*) from different communities who had knowledge of the history under discussion.<sup>153</sup>

Carlson brings his point home with an anecdote about a Stó:lō community member who tried to give false historical evidence which the wider Stó:lō scrutinized and condemned. In Stó:lō society, one's reputation as a knowledgeable historical expert was the social capital that brings prestige and status.

During the elections for the chieftainship of Soowahlie, Captain John was branded an impostor who falsely claimed high status by his contenders. According to the Epworth transcript, he fulfilled his life's ambition of becoming a great chief by hosting a great potlatch which was attended by all the prominent chiefs of the surrounding area, after which they all proclaimed allegiance to him. His prestige grew as he was called to witness other potlatches. But during the subsequent election controversy, some were saying that he made his fortunes by exploiting the newcomer economy and that he was actually of low birth.<sup>154</sup> However, instead of having to make a persuasive case of his genealogical claim to nobility in order to secure his position within his community, the government had him appointed to the position after he failed to get elected multiple times.

Captain John may not have known his history, or perhaps the contenders had better evidence, and he consequentially lost this "history war," to use a term by John Lutz to describe such disputes. Given the underwhelming outcome of the Soowahlie election for Captain John, it is possible that the other candidates had more convincing cases for their hereditary status. The Catholic candidates also enjoyed the support of Catholic missionaries who sought to organize reserves based on already established hereditary leaderships. Captain John may have exploited

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<sup>153</sup> Keith Carlson, "Reflections on Indigenous History and Memory," in *Myth & Memory: Stories of Indigenous-European Contact*, ed. John Lutz (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 51.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, 198; See also the map with Captain John labelled as "Chief" in the Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre's map room or pictured on page 196 of *The Power of Place* by Carlson.

the new opportunities brought by white settlers to break out of the class barrier of his own society.<sup>155</sup> Perhaps Methodism and European society provided him with a chance to succeed in a world that would otherwise have denied him the influence he desired.

Despite the possible absence of traditional avenues to power, Captain John was able to remain in an important position. This is largely thanks to the governmental involvement and investment in the election results of Soowahlie and they were trying to consolidate control on reserves and reduce the reserve land base. In this sense, it did not matter that Captain John could not access traditional sources of power since the situation of the time facilitated his rise in European society given his essential services as a canoe man and as a contributor to British Columbia's infrastructure. Moreover, his faith and corresponding belief in the necessity of reforming his society according to European values ensured that he would enjoy the sometimes extralegal aid of colonial government. Unlike the other two case studies, he did not feel the need to confront European histories of his people because he was either unable to read them or because this genre was still in its infancy in his corner of the world.

Rather than use history as a means of claiming his status and rights in his own society, Captain John was able to circumvent this disadvantage using the incoming settlers and prospectors and sources of wealth. In this way, the incoming colonial society aided Captain John in his efforts to attain status in his own society. As Yanna Yannakakis has explained in the context of Mexico, Aboriginal leaders in colonial contexts often had to play uncomfortable roles in order to stay in power. First and foremost, they had to maintain legitimacy in the eyes of colonial authorities, and this sometimes meant that they had to make decisions that were unpopular with the Aboriginal community. Ideally, one would try to keep the approval of both

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<sup>155</sup> Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), ch. 1.

the colonial officials and the Aboriginal community. In 19<sup>th</sup>-century British Columbia, with incoming and Protestant settler society and corresponding social and political beliefs, epitomized in the politics of Joseph Trutch, this meant alienating the largely Catholic Aboriginal community to a large extent. If it were not Captain John at the head of this reserve, it is likely, I believe, that another person that accorded with the wishes of the settler community in Sardis would have come to power, either by extrajudicial or violent means.

Given the scant evidence of the inner thoughts of Captain John, it would be difficult to recreate what his adopted faith meant to him and what he made it mean in this rapidly changing contact zone in the Chilliwack River Valley. This problem is compounded by the fact that the principal source of information he left behind was given in Chinook and translated into English by a white reverend with his own cultural lenses through which he made sense of his world. Of course, it is likely that he thought that he was doing what was ultimately good for his community, even if many under his authority did not agree. It is also possible that he simply wanted to stay in power by any means necessary and realized how to use the colonial society for this goal. Given the quickly changing ethnic landscape of British Columbia during his lifetime, perhaps he thought it made more sense to ensure the alliance with and increasingly dominant colonial society. If he was disenfranchised within his own culture, why work hard to try and maintain authority in their eyes, especially when it was becoming clear that Europeans would soon dominate the region? Demographically speaking, it must have been obvious that Europeans would be the new majority for a long time.

The dramatic influence of his own cultural exclusion, if indeed he was of low birth, exposed him to disadvantages that inhibited his ability to realize his goal of becoming a great and powerful chief in his own society. However, thanks to the opportunities to exploit in the

incoming colonial society, he was able to rise to power. His susceptibility to European cultural values, either because he was convinced of their superiority or because he wanted to build a strong alliance with the Europeans, was facilitated by his conversion to Methodism following his crisis with alcohol. As with other societies, the weakest point is the people who are excluded, who are open to exploitation by outside influences offering them a better lot in life if they join their side. It appears that Captain John's ambition permitted him to thrive in the capitalist economy. The connections he made through his exploits allowed him to remain chief after the democratic election on Soowahlie threatened his leadership. Throughout his tenure as chief, Captain John became known for his religious dedication and his role in developing Soowahlie.

Much more than the other two case studies, it does seem that Captain John's identification with Methodism caused him to distance himself from his Aboriginal heritage and traditions. However, this may have more to do with his low status within his own culture as well as with British Columbia's place in colonial time during his lifetime. European society offered him more than his own society did, though he did try and have it both ways. The problem with Captain John's situation was that he could not separate the Christian message from the cultural convictions of European settlers in the area. If he had more familiarity with the Bible and could read the works of early ethnographers and travel writer, then he may very well have come to conclusions similar to Guaman Poma and William Apess. Some more oral history research on Captain John's personal life and on the opinion of his contemporaries would be a welcome addition to the scholarship on this matter, and would surely shed some light on this enigmatic figure.

With respect to Rigoberto Quemé Chay's declaration, it seems Captain John may indeed have seen a problem in adhering to an Aboriginal identity and claiming to be Christian.

However, this is likely because he was so powerfully influenced by European cultural norms, and not because there is necessarily anything contradictory in being a Christian and an Aboriginal. There is no indication that he was any less Aboriginal after his conversion than before. He did not sacrifice his Aboriginal worldview simply because he converted to Methodism. It would be strange to consider Captain John as a less authentic individual than William Apess and Guaman Poma. After all, he was the least colonized subject mentioned in this thesis; he did not speak a colonial language, he was intimately familiar with Coast Salish society and cultural practices. That he adopted some of the European cultural influences has more to do with Europeans' belief that their cultural values and their religion were one in the same. The other two case studies, due to their place in colonial time, were better able to discriminate between Christianity and European ambitions. Even so, there is no indication that Captain John felt any less "Aboriginal" after his conversion, especially when considering that he was Catholic before converting to Methodism.

## Conclusion

In the introduction, I mentioned that the behaviour of these three people could be partially explained by their position in colonial time. Rather than seeing each person as at a point on the chronological timeline, we can imagine them at different points on a spectrum of varying levels of colonial maturity, which correspond to increasingly firm control of Aboriginal groups and a realization by Aboriginal actors of the negative consequences of such a state of affairs. If this theory has merit, then we should be able to notice a scale, with the two on either end of the spectrum (Captain John and William Apess) acting in very different ways, while Guaman Poma shares some aspect of both. I believe that this is evident in their writings and actions.

As one reads through the primary sources left by these men, certain themes become apparent. In this colonial order, justified in the minds of metropolitan bureaucrats by a number of irrational and inconsistent logics (despite their claims to be the true bearers of rationality and virtue), Aboriginal individuals faced similar hardships and sought to remedy these injustices in similar ways according to their social positions within their own society and their place in colonial time. One of the most rhetorically effective ways to do this was by pointing out the condemnation that the Bible promises to those who disenfranchise and subjugate others; they also untangled the European society's Christian convictions from the cultural prejudices that underlie paternalistic colonial policies.

Guaman Poma, William Apess, and Captain John Swalis were all devout Christian men. They did not seem to see a paradox in their Aboriginal heritage and their Christian identity, but what it meant for their level of cooperation with European society differed. Moreover, they all lived through a period of intense religious conflict. Land disputes caused by unjust colonial



policies caused, not only disputes with colonial society, but with other Aboriginals as well, pitting them against one another and distracting them from the greater threat to their autonomy.

Of course, all three case studies identified proudly as indigenous men. However, this was never intended to coincide with Europeans' vision of what it meant to be indigenous—that is, a static identity based firmly on indigenous culture and habits on the eve of Contact. Rather, they saw their own indigenous identity as a much more complex and nuanced identity, which changed and adapted to major events, including but not limited to the colonial encounter. This is why Guaman Poma and William Apess spend so much time and energy rearticulating the indigenous past for European audiences. Poma explains his people's change through various cataclysmic events, such as the Incan and Spanish conquests; William Apess similarly lays out indigenous history through a cultural tradition stretching all the way back to the lost tribes of Israel, up to King Philip's War, and the imposition of the American colonies and, later, states.

There are many similarities in the writings of William Apess and Guaman Poma. They both used history as a way to debunk some of the cultural myths about Aboriginal people and about Europeans. They recognized the power of history and showed that Aboriginal people fit solidly within the Judeo-Christian historical record. William Apess did this by connecting the Aboriginal people with the lost tribes of Israel and suggested their Semitic origins, while Guaman Poma tried to prove that the pre-Incan Andeans were Christians since apostolic times. Either way, Aboriginal people were depicted as sharing similar cultural and religious heritage as the Europeans. They also used history to prove that Aboriginal people were not as uncivilized as Europeans thought, and that Europeans could be just as bad (and often worse) than Aboriginals. They did this by exposing the atrocities committed by Europeans against Aboriginal people, then pointed out via Christian morality the spiritual degradation that came with such behaviour.

Aboriginal people came out looking like true Christians while Europeans came out looking like hypocrites. This was all done by referencing European authors' works, such as those of history, philosophy, political treatises, and religious works.

Captain John's life seems to have taken a very different path than those of Guaman Poma and William Apress. Captain John's conversion to Methodism from Catholicism cemented within him a belief that the spirits involved in Stó:lō dances were actually demonic forces; his Protestantism allowed him to be seen in the eyes of Methodist farmers as the only acceptable choice for the chieftainship of Soowahlie. Captain John's denominational affiliation served him well in the BC Interior, where different churches battled one another for supremacy, and where he was sought out as a powerful ally from Catholics and Protestants. This seems to go against the belief that literacy and a strong historical consciousness was important for advancement. On the contrary, his relatively cooperative nature made him appealing to the Methodist farmers, who were anxious to secure their land pretensions that fell within the Douglas Soowahlie Reserve boundaries. Despite being one of the richest men in the colony, he lived in a very modest house, donating generously to his church and may have allowed his reserve to be truncated, making way for his new neighbours and circumventing the violence that the settlers threatened. This meant alienating a large portion of the Aboriginal community that he once ruled. It is much more difficult to see Captain John as a hero of Aboriginal society in retrospect. While it is easy to look back at Guaman Poma and William Apress as champions of their peoples' causes, Captain John seems to have been complicit in the colonial plot to further control Aboriginal land and economy. His place in colonial time may, in part, make his decisions intelligible. It seems he had to sacrifice his authority in the Aboriginal sphere in order to maintain favour with the colonial society, which could ensure that he lived a life of power. Had he opposed the truncation of

Soowahlie and promoted Aboriginal cultural expression, it would have been much more difficult to remain chief, as the elections on Soowahlie demonstrate. The colonial society wanted a certain kind of chief on Soowahlie. Given his distress over the state of his soul, Captain John probably did believe in the truth of Protestant Christianity, which was conflated with European social values thanks to missionaries and settlers.

What makes Captain John's situation distinct from the other two case studies is that he was less familiar with European conventions like literacy and Christian teachings than Guaman Poma and William Apress; Poma and (especially) Apress were skilled writers, but Captain John was illiterate. Given the strong emphasis that colonial societies often placed on literacy and Christianity as a prerequisite to becoming fully civilized, it would not be unreasonable to guess that Captain John's situation would put him in a severe disadvantage compared to Poma and Apress in this matter. However, this is not the case. If the goals of these three are considered—that is, what they wanted to achieve in their lives—then Captain John largely succeeded, while the other two did not.

First, because the European society was relatively new, especially the settler society, which interacted with Aboriginal groups in a much different manner than the Hudson's Bay Company employees who were interested in trade rather than land and evangelization, the long-term effects on Aboriginal society could not have been fully appreciated by Captain John. On the other side of the continent, and much later in terms of colonial time, William Apress was acutely aware of the often sinister plots of the European society to take control of the land and culture of the Aboriginal groups. Apress denounced these tactics whether they were occurring in his own time or centuries in the past. Judging from his writings, Apress did not seem to see many redemptive qualities in European culture, and European claims to be conducting a civilizing

mission were understood as a rhetorical disguise for the violence and theft visited upon Aboriginal societies. Guaman Poma, located between the other two in term of the progression of the colonial state, seemed to believe in the justice and authority of the Spanish King and the Pope, and worked hard in his early years to promote cooperation between Spanish and Andean societies. Nevertheless, Guaman Poma recognized the corruption around him and tried to correct some of the moral and political shortcomings of the Viceroyalty of Peru. What Guaman Poma advocated was a reorganization of the colonial relationship to improve relations and governance of the Andes under the authority of the Spanish King. He could write, but not as well as Apess, but certainly better than Captain John.

There is an interesting point of comparison between Guaman Poma and Captain John. Both in Peru and British Columbia, the colonial state preferred to use local Aboriginal leaders to administer the lands of the colony in accordance with European desires. As such, Aboriginal leaders had to play nuanced roles to broker good relations between the two groups. This sometimes meant making decisions that are unpopular with one side or the other. Both Guaman Poma and Captain John made unpopular decisions at times. They both sought to promote conformity to orthodox Christian belief (whether Catholic or Methodist) and suppress Aboriginal spirituality. Captain John was a bit more rigid in this regard; he seemed to have wanted strict emulation of European Christianity. Guaman Poma, on the other hand, made carefully thought out points about the redemptive aspects of pre-Contact religious expressions, which he explains in his detailed accounts of Aboriginal rites and ceremonies, as well as his history alluding to the Christian nature of Andeans, especially prior to the Incan conquests. Also, both in British Columbia and in Peru, colonial officials demonstrated that they preferred Aboriginal leaders who enjoyed authority among local Aboriginal populations. However, if this got in the way of

colonial desires, they were easily ignored and cast aside. Guaman Poma's desires for the future of the Viceroyalty of Peru meant that he was easily ignored in favour of another group that was more in line with colonial policies. Captain John, on the other hand, was willing to rule in line with colonial policies and as a result he was able to remain as chief despite failing to get elected as chief numerous times.

Unlike William Apess, Guaman Poma and Captain John had to make their appeals to the colonial society or government in addition to their respective Aboriginal societies in order to exercise their authority. In Apess' context, the approval of Aboriginal and colonial groups was irrelevant since he lived in a much more mature colonial state; indeed if he had to approval of the colonial state for his actions and writings he may have felt that he was on the wrong side of history, morally speaking. Guaman Poma appealed to his legitimacy as an Aboriginal leader by his claims to the ancient ethnic lords, while Captain John secured his with a great potlatch, which he was able to host thanks to his exploitation of the capitalist economy brought by European settlers and gold prospectors. Ultimately, the success of their arguments for their Aboriginal legitimacy mattered little if it interfered with the colonial state's ambitions: Guaman Poma was useful when he was aiding Church inspectors to combat unorthodox sectarianism, but when he began to argue for the return of his land and self-rule for the Andes, his lineage mattered little; Captain John seemed to have had a weaker case for his legitimacy in Aboriginal society, but his faith and openness to colonial society's suggestions ensured that even democratic elections could not keep him from serving as Chief of Soowahlie. Both Captain John and Guaman Poma were accused by their Aboriginal rivals of coming from common stock, not noble bloodlines. While this was enough to rid Guaman Poma of his position of power, thanks to his beliefs about how the Andes should be ruled, Captain John's politics were more or less in line with that of the

European settlers, and so he was able to continue in his position despite being unable to prove his noble heritage. The amount of acceptance that Captain John enjoyed in the Aboriginal community still needs further exploration, however. There seems to be suggestions that some reluctantly tolerated his rule while others embraced it.

Christianity's role on Aboriginal societies has been anything but straightforward. One can hardly blame Mayor Rigoberto Quemé Chay for his belief that Christianity is an unfortunately persistent relic of colonialism that continues to threaten Aboriginal culture. Nevertheless, if one looks to the past, there is evidence of Christianity serving as a powerful tool for the exposition of the damage of colonialism and the hypocrisy of European societies in the Americas. How Christianity affected the Aboriginal group in question seems to be—at least partially—a function of the place in colonial time, since the further along a place is in terms of colonial time, the more the likely it is that the Aboriginal leadership will have critical opinions about the colonial relationship. The further along the colonial timeline, the more control the European society will have and the better able Aboriginal societies will be at understanding the disconnect between the Christian message and the policies of the colony; by then, however, it is often too late to do much about it other than try to expose the injustice, as William Apess' life demonstrates. Guaman Poma did help the colonial government to some extent, but when he tried to bring his message of justice and improvement to the attention of the colonial authorities, he was ultimately ignored. Captain John seemed to have used colonial society just as much as they used him; he seemed to have genuinely believed in the justice of the colonial government's policies and related this to the Christian message.

Furthermore, one must be able to discriminate between the different kinds of Christianity. By this I do not mean sects or denominations, though these are important to recognize. Rather, in

these case studies we can see two basic kinds of Christianity: 1. Christianity as interpreted by Europeans for the Aboriginal subject, and 2. Christianity as interpreted by the Aboriginal subject. Captain John belonged to the former group, again, largely thanks to his position in colonial time. Guaman Poma and William Apess were much more a part of the latter distinction. Ironically, it seems that in order to dialogue and debate with Europeans' version of Christianity one must be somewhat well versed in European languages and writings, which did not further bind Apess and Poma to the colonial power, but rather provided them the tool to combat it in the name of religion and justice.

Rather than Christianity threatening the Aboriginal worldview, it seems Aboriginal intellectuals have historically embraced the Christian message in order to strengthen their pride in their ethnic heritage. It has convinced many Aboriginal leaders, not only the ones mentioned in this thesis, of the value in their struggle against injustice and oppression. A Christian-Aboriginal worldview, rather than causing the individual to be slightly inauthentic or insincere, can actually strengthen both their Aboriginal pride and their Christian convictions. Christianity's role in colonization is ambiguous, but the claim that one cannot be authentically Aboriginal and sincerely Christian at the same time is historically inaccurate.

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