
DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate School of the Ohio State University.

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The Ohio State University
2006

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This dissertation analyzes the construction of certain aspects of New World native identity on the part of Spanish historians between the years of 1492 and 1615. In the early part of the time period, Spanish historians earnestly tried to decipher New World history through the use of traditional Spanish historical documents and native techniques considered to be of questionable accuracy. However, the process became subverted in the latter half of the sixteenth century by colonial economic interests seeking to answer the concerns put forth by reformers such as Bartolomé de Las Casas, who questioned the legal, moral, spiritual and social construction of the New World native subject under Spanish rule. These later histories – written by Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa and others – are marked by a negative construction of New World native subjectivity.

In this dissertation, I take on two aspects of New World history considered by Spanish historians, the related problematics of origins and political history. The Spanish discursive construction of New World history was part of an overall process of subalternization and marginalization of the native population. Spanish historians searching for history had at first turned to two
sources: their own ancient texts and native record-keeping techniques. These historians soon found that their ancient authorities had nothing to say about lands to the West of which they had been unaware, and native record-keeping techniques were considered unreliable. Once it had been established that New World history was a ‘blank slate’ of sorts, Spanish historians took the opportunity to construct native subjectivity in terms that permitted – and encouraged – the continued Spanish presence in the New World.

This dissertation seeks to challenge traditional readings of colonial texts, eschewing superficial meaning in favor of searching for hidden power structures and means of repression. It draws on the work of noted theorists and writers such as José Rabasa, Walter Mignolo and Edward Said, but is nevertheless original, taking an overdue look at the discourses of history that produced the native subject during the early colonial period.
I would like to thank my advisor, Lucia Costigan, and the members of my committee, Ileana Rodriguez and Ignacio Corona, for all of their help and support. I would like to thank my parents, Richard and Priscilla, and my wife Maricarmen for their unwavering support. I would also like to thank the Arthur J. Schlessinger Foundation, whose generous grant allowed me to come back and defend this dissertation.
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INTRODUCTION

It is safe to say that the New World blew the minds of the first Europeans to encounter it. There were so many new plants, animals, fruits, cultures and sensations. One of the many things they found difficult to grasp was the lack of a written history of the natives. There was no mention of the New World or its peoples in any of the works considered most authoritative by the Spanish, such as the works of Aristotle, Plato, or the Bible. As for the natives, their history-keeping methods, such as quipus, codices, or storytelling, were considered so inferior by the Spanish that they were dismissed out of hand as unreliable.

One of the Spanish projects in the New World therefore became the “creation” of a history for the land and its people. What began as an earnest effort, however, to discover the origins and history of the peoples of the New World was subverted in the second half of the sixteenth century by colonial economic interests and the need to justify the violence of the conquest in the hearts and minds of the leaders and people of Spain. The justification of conquest through the construction of the indigenous subject in terms of history and origins
helped lay the foundations for five hundred years of racism, enslavement, and oppression in the Americas.

In this dissertation, I will look at the histories of the New World created in the first 123 years of the Spanish colonial enterprise, from the “discovery” of America in 1492 to the 1615 completion of Guaman Poma’s *Primer Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno*. I will pay particular attention to two aspects of history as they were handled by various writers during that time: first, the question of the Old World origins of the New World natives, and second, the political and social history of the New World, in particular the Andes. I will show how the debate over the origins of the New World natives, increasingly influenced by millenarian and Divine Will theories, eventually turned into a justification for the conquest. The construction of the indigenous subject was eventually founded on certain Old World races that were selected as the progenitors of the Americans. These Old World races – primarily Jews and Muslims, although there were others – brought with them certain negative stereotypes, “baggage” if you will. I will show how the debate concerning political history also became a search for the justification for the continued occupation of the Americas as Spanish writers in Peru in the 1570’s elaborated theories of pre-contact indigenous life that essentially amounted to anarchy or barbarism.

The primary texts I have chosen for this dissertation include many of the most important works of literary non-fiction from the early colonial era, such as the works of Bartolomé de Las Casas and José de Acosta. I have also included
some lesser-known texts, such as Gregorio García’s *Origen de los Indios de el Nuevo Mundo e Indias Occidentales*¹, a work which, although obscure today, is crucial to this study because it focused in its entirety on the question of origins. I have chosen non-fiction colonial era texts because such works formed the space in which the debate among learned Europeans regarding the history of the New World took place, and because such works can easily be studied without having to take into account the vagaries of fiction or drama.

I have found it possible to trace the trajectory of both arguments (origin and political history) through the first one and one-quarter century of Spanish rule in the Indies in the aforementioned texts. I have found that as pressure increased on Spain in the latter half of the sixteenth century – pressure that was economic, religious, and social – the ‘invention’ of the native in the New World became increasingly negative as the role of the American in the ‘Divine Plan’ became that of villain and victim.

Before I continue, I’d like to briefly address the question of the nature of *literature* and *Literature*. Literature, with a capital L, is a relatively recent notion as we understand it today. To give it a general definition, capital-L literature is any written work, often fiction, which is considered somehow valuable, worthy, or relevant to any given culture. Shakespeare is Literature. *Don Quixote* is a work of Literature. These artists and works have become part of high culture, and are often used to study the cultures that produced them.

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¹ In this dissertation, I abbreviate this title to *Origen de los Indios*. 
On the other hand, small-l literature is commonly used to refer to just about anything that has been printed, from books to pamphlets, that is generally informative in nature. You may hear someone say something like “The literature on the subject is limited,” which means that little has been written about the topic in question, to give one example.

In this dissertation, I refer to many of the colonial-era works that are so crucial to my arguments as “literature.” In this, I use a very modern definition of the term, favored by my contemporaries. In this paper, literature should be understood as any book, treatise, chronicle or encyclopedia that was produced in the colonial era and which can be studied in order to gain insight into the culture that produced it. Therefore, José de Acosta wrote literature, as I define it, even though it’s not fiction.

Had a notion of literature existed in the Spanish colonial world, they probably would have considered ancient works such as the *Odyssey* or the *Iliad* to be qualified, but little else. Certainly, José de Acosta would not have felt that he was producing literature: he would have defined himself as a sort of scientist of God, a man whose duty it was to explain God’s will on Earth and why He did what He did. He would almost certainly be startled at the notion that four hundred years after he wrote, his works would be studied as cultural relics and not as divine explanations as he intended. His works were to his contemporaries what encyclopedias are to ours: a storehouse of knowledge and analysis.
The past and the present: post-colonial theories

Coloniality is the essence of the modern/colonial trajectory whose history is the history of Latin America and the history that made Latin America, although it has been hidden from view through two hundred years of nation building and national ideology. (Mignolo 2001 431).

Some modern academic movements and disciplines, which have become known by such names as subaltern studies or post-colonial studies, have been very useful in re-reading colonial-era texts to gain an understanding of the reality that produced them. Post-colonialism is a world-wide movement: many nations with colonial history are re-examining their colonial legacy, and some of the most important post-colonial theoretical work comes from regions such as India or Africa which have long histories of coloniality. Even “First World” regions such as Australia and the United States of America are re-evaluating the dynamics of their own colonial eras. Post-colonialism is a modern movement, inspired by and linked to civil rights movements and feminism, both of which also challenge discourses of power as they relate to how dominant (or hegemonic) populations interact with those disenfranchised groups that share their same cultural space.

What, exactly, is post-colonialism? David Spurr defines post-colonial studies in the following way: “an historical situation marked by the dismantling of
traditional institutions of colonial power, and as a search for alternatives to the
discourses of the colonial era.” (Spurr 6) Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and
Helen Tiffin favor a more broad definition: “We use the term ‘post-colonial’...to
cover all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of
colonization to the present day.” (Ashcroft, et. al 2)

Although definitions differ, a safe generalization would be to say that
post-colonial areas of study tend to focus on models of power and their effects on
relationships between different peoples and cultures. They seek to re-evaluate the
colonial period in an attempt to isolate and understand the more subtle ways in
which colonial “hegemonies” were established and maintained in which the
dominant European cultures controlled native “subaltern” populations. One of the
general themes behind these theories is that the power structures implemented
during the colonial period by the colonizers did not necessarily end with
independence: not all power is legislative, attributed to a far-off monarch, or
enforceable by the police or army. There is also a mighty power inherent in the
persuasiveness of discourse. Stereotypes, racist attitudes, and traditions that were
established in the venerable texts of the colonial period persist today. The
colonial situation is, and always has been, one in which unequal relations of
power must occur: “The concept of ‘hegemony’ will emerge precisely in a
context dominated by the experience of fragmentation and by the indeterminacy
of the articulation between different struggles and different subject positions”
(Laclau and Mouffe 13).
Post-colonialism, in turn, was made possible by thinkers such as Michel Foucault, who was one of the first to question the nature of the relationship between subject and object through discourse. Foucault was interested in the complex relationship of language and reality, and what effect one had on the other. For Foucault, it was impossible to separate the act of naming from the object being named. This concept is naturally relevant to this dissertation in a very general way, insomuch as I believe that the Spanish who had the power to name, define and invent the natives did much to invent the native subject as it existed in the post-contact world.

So as we struggle to understand our world today, we find ourselves turning more and more to the past. Post-colonial theories have sparked a reassessment of many historical documents, including literature, especially in fields such as anthropology, literary analysis, and history.

When unequal relations of power exist between the colonizer and the colonized, the hegemony gains the power to privilege its own discourse: it gains the power to always be “right.” This, in turn, can lead to the power of invention. The conqueror writes the history and restricts access to the discourses of power. When Gayatri Spivak asked her now famous question “Can the subaltern speak?” she was asking if once-colonized peoples still lacked complete access to important discursive spaces. She came to the conclusion that they did.

The perfect example is that of Guaman Poma, an Andean intellectual whose lone work, an illustrated letter to the King of Spain in 1615, has fortunately survived to this day. Guaman Poma had read the histories written for his people
by the Spanish and did not agree with them. He therefore wrote his own, mimicking his sources in an attempt to gain access to their discursive space. Because of his identity, however, as a subaltern, he was denied this access. The king never read his letter, which languished for centuries in an archive. The unique case of Guaman Poma is considered at length in Chapter Five of this dissertation.

Oriental and Asian theorists such as Spivak have had a great deal of influence on post-colonial theories. Homi Bhabha, an Indian theorist, claimed that “It is always in relation to the place of the Other that colonial desire is articulated: the phantasmagoric space of possession that no one subject can singly or fixedly occupy, and therefore permits the dream of the inversion of roles” (Bhabha 44). In other words, all colonial discourse has, as its point of origin, the differences – real, imagined or invented – between colonizer and colonized.

Edward Said, a Middle Eastern academic and intellectual, contributed greatly to post-colonial theory with the publication of his groundbreaking work Orientalism (1979). In this work, he identifies “Orientalism” as the process by which the West defined the Orient:

…Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient: dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a
Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (Said 3)

No one has ever questioned the more obvious aspects of colonial domination of one culture by another. Minorities (in terms of population within a particular region or culture) have been able to successfully militarily dominate larger populations with better soldiers or weaponry for millennia. But not all colonial power comes with the blade of a sword or the end of a musket. The formidable military presence, courts of law and the Inquisition, and presence of royal viceroys were only the most obvious manifestation of Spanish hegemonic power. A colonial hegemony has many options when it comes to articulation of its power. Like the conquistador or encomendero, the bureaucrat was also a colonizer, an agent of the hegemony. Said points out that many people in many different fields are agents of colonialism:

The kind of political questions raised by Orientalism, then, are as follows: What other sorts of intellectual, aesthetic, scholarly, and cultural energies went into the making of an imperialist tradition like the Orientalist one? How did philology, lexicography, history, biology, political and economic theory, novel-writing, and lyric poetry come to the service of Orientalism’s broadly imperialist view of the world? (15)
At the heart of all studies of colonial Latin America must be the realization that almost everything that transpired in the colonial New World was at least partially based upon the unequal levels of power held by the Spanish over the New World natives. Said points out that the same was true on the British and French colonies in the Orient: “... ideas, cultures, and histories cannot seriously be understood or studied without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power, also being studied.” (5)

Perhaps the greatest power that one culture can wield over another is the power of definition. By this I mean that a dominant culture can attribute personal and intimate characteristics to the people of the subaltern culture through discourse, and enforce this discursive attribution in the day-to-day actions of the colonial administration and culture. The hegemony defines the subaltern class as “stupid,” and then denies them education as a “waste of time.” This definition – of America, of “The Orient,” of any sort of subaltern “other” – is a very important yet often overlooked aspect of colonial era domination. Even when the cultures that are being defined by others are aware of what is happening – in chapter five, I examine the unique case of Guaman Poma – they are often powerless to stop it.

The results of this sort of invention can be immediate as well as disastrous. If, for example, the natives of an island in the Caribbean were “defined” (or invented) as savages, the colonizers had every right to defend themselves from them, even through the use of pre-emptive slaving raids. If the ruling Inca class of Peru is “defined” as illegitimate rulers, the Spanish have every right under their own discourse and notions of “justice” to conquer them and take
their wealth. Hegemonic interpellation discourse, more often than not, is self-serving even when it is not self-conscious. Although the Spanish may not always have been consciously aware of their “invention” of the Americans2 – many of them seemed to earnestly want to understand the new people, their history, and customs – invention nevertheless took place, and the strategies used by Spanish to purportedly learn more about the Americans often had disastrous racist side effects.

What is the end result of colonialism? The result of military occupation is slavery and exploitation. The result of the use of discursive power to define is less obvious. One result is racism. Albert Memmi, in his 1982 book Racism, informs us that racism was a necessary part of empire and coloniality, and he is quite clear on the links between racism and colonialism. In fact, he elevates racism from an attitude to a necessity for the colonizers:

The European colonists, as the dominant group, literally had to be racist to legitimize their control. To continue to live as colonists, to which all alternative had already been unimaginable to them, they had to render inferior their ill-fated partners in the colonial relation. (Memmi 31)

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2 In this dissertation, I occasionally use the term “American” to refer to any native indigenous ethnic individual or group. It is my desire to avoid use of the word “Indian” to refer to the New World natives, some of whose descendants today find the term offensive. In this, my use of the term “American” should not be confused with our modern definition which generally refers to a native of the United States of America.
According to Memmi, racism is a symptom of dominance, which, in turn, is one aspect of colonialism. It is something that constructs the Other and defines him/her, always in a negative light, and always in a subordinate position. It is a discourse that is often contradictory. For example, the New World natives were thought of both ingenuous and devious. Both characterizations are negative and therefore were applied to the natives, yet both clearly contradict each other.

The racist sees no contradiction in this situation, only the ‘truth’ of his own superiority. Memmi points out these contradictions clearly, and it is obvious that racism cannot withstand the assault of logic. Yet it persevered.

There is another aspect of racism that fit in well with the colonial system. It was, in its own way, a justification of the conquest in and of itself. If the other races are inferior, would they not benefit from the benign aid of those fortunate enough to be born European?

Thus, the colonialist constructs a portrait of the colonized that is so well adapted to the needs of colonial domination that it presents itself as the predestined order of things. It has been said that Europeans carved out empires for themselves because those whose lives they usurped were simply ‘colonizable.’ And how could Europe refuse its ‘historical obligation’ to fill that void? It is even asserted with a straight face that the protectorates were actually established to protect the colonized (Memmi 53).
Here, Memmi establishes racism as a universal component of any colonial dynamic, but he was concerned mainly with the Middle East and Israel. The works of Said, Memmi, Spivak and others can be of great use to the modern Latin American scholar, but there are limits to the usefulness of theories written to understand the Middle East or India. Fortunately, there are a number of Latin American scholars who have elaborated upon post-colonialism in the New World.

Post-colonialism in Latin America

Perhaps the critic who took the first steps towards a uniquely Latin American form of post-colonialism was Edmundo O’Gorman in his 1958 book *The Invention of America*. O’Gorman took issue with the concept of “discovery” as it applied to Columbus’ voyage to the New World. He preferred the term “invented” because the explorers and colonists began naming places and trying to fit the New World into the context of the old.

The basic premise of the book is that from the moment Christopher Columbus decided that the land he saw before him was India, and refused to let any inconvenient facts convince him otherwise, people have invented America, seeing in it what they want or expect to see, instead of what was really there. The consequences of these inventions have been far-reaching and often harmful: to state an obvious example, Native Americans are, to this day, referred to as “Indians” even though that particular theory was disproved during Columbus’ lifetime (although he himself never accepted it).
In his groundbreaking 1993 book *Inventing America*, José Rabasa builds upon the work of critics such as Edmundo O’Gorman and Edward Said in developing his theories of an *invented* America. Rabasa effects a re-evaluation of colonial era texts not as histories of the New World, but as ‘rhetorical artifices’ from which much can be learned about the unequal relations of power in the colonial era. This is a process he defines as “counter-colonial thinking.”

Counter-colonial thinking is the act of reading a colonial-era text not for the superficial information it provides – dates, places, etc. – but for the inherent reinforcing of colonial divisions of power and discourse evident as a subtext. It is, in effect, a reading ‘against the grain’ of these ancient texts and a re-evaluation of their worth: Rabasa finds these works valuable for many reasons that would have been incomprehensible to their ancient authors.

Rabasa is concerned with the process of *allegoresis*, or how history is given meaning, in a mythic sense. In other words, the historian who reports that Columbus departed in 1492 is declaring a historical fact: the historian who asserts that God led Columbus to the New World is engaging in allegoresis. Colonial works are often laden with such meaning, and separating this from the ‘facts’ can be difficult.

Rabasa is less concerned with the ‘facts,’ however, and more concerned with the process itself. He cautions against setting the record straight: colonial studies is not about righting ancient wrongs, but rather it is about understanding what Mignolo would call the “colonial difference.” The colonization of the physical space of the New World is not difficult to reconstruct: battles, landings,
discoveries, etc. are all well-documented. But the colonization of subjectivity and identity is a far more slippery subject to pin down.

Texts from the colonial era are not merely places where colonial reality is reflected, waiting for a modern scholar to decipher. Whether through processes such as allegoresis or association, the discourse in these works actually partially created the reality of the New World. The histories of the New World tried to capture facts and they failed in most regards. But the act of creating these histories had its own life, and their discourse, with all of its implications, was accepted as factual by the hegemonic Europeans. Belief in these histories made them true, and by the time their ‘facts’ were disproved, the damage had been done. In some cases, even the Indians themselves came to believe parts of the invention thrust upon them, although many cases of resistance are known.

To use an analogy, I would ask the reader to consider the early maps of the New World. Distorted and inaccurate, they reflect early yet earnest attempts to represent the physical space of the New World. Later mapmakers have corrected these early, inaccurate maps because there was something to compare them to: the actual physical space they intend to portray. The rivers, mountains, and coastline did not change drastically, at least in their relative locations. Thus, as the colonial period progressed, the maps increased in accuracy and usefulness.

The early histories and chronicles also attempted to document colonial American reality. And at first, they were as inaccurate as the aforementioned maps when they tried to clarify New World culture and history. But unlike the maps, there was no stable referent with which to compare them in order to
improve them and therefore the self-serving European discourse became its own referent. Such was the power and influence of the written word that New World reality was forced to shift in order to accommodate the histories instead of the other way around. It is as if an inaccurate map, believed by so many to be true, eventually became true on the basis of that belief alone. But such is the difference between mapping physical space and mapping subjectivity: “The boundaries of identity and difference are continually repositioned in relation to varying points of reference. The meanings of here and there, home and abroad, third and first, margin and centre keep on being displaced according to how one positions oneself (Minh-ha 20).”

Our modern Counter-colonial thinking seeks to map out this middle space – for it is here that the invention of America took place. New World ‘reality’ changed irrevocably the moment the Spanish landed, and zealous priests assured that much culture and history was lost forever when thousands of codices were burned. But the histories that replaced them could never be true – no amount of belief, on the part of Europeans, that Indians were descended from Jews would make it so. What came about was a situation in which the hegemony – with the power to define reality through discourse – began enforcing a lie.

Walter Mignolo prefers to study the Latin American colonial period – which he refers to as modern/colonial world because he marks it as the beginning of the modern, capitalist age – through the lens of what he calls the colonial difference. The colonial difference is the distance that Europe has put between itself and the Other. Colonial difference does not refer simply to the Atlantic
Ocean, but to the intellectual, social, religious and moral distance as well. The colonial difference is perhaps best summed up in terms of dualities. Europe is civilized: the New World was barbaric. Europe was educated, the New World ignorant. Christian/pagan. Enlightened/brutal. Literate/illiterate. With history/without history. The list goes on and on and was in a constant state of flux as new inventions took place in the New World.

Many of these differences are artificial. Take, for example, the educated/ignorant duality. During the colonial period, the Spanish could quote Aristotle, read and write and carry on theological debates. The natives, on the other hand, could grow potatoes, which the Europeans had never seen before. It begs the question: which culture was more “educated?” The Spanish, who could talk about Plato, or the natives, who could eat? It all depends on how one qualifies the word “educated.” The New World natives were not any less “educated” than the Spanish: their knowledge was just different.

Yet the notion that has survived through the generations to us in the present day is that the Spanish had the advantage of education. This is the power of invention: in the educated/ignorant duality, the Spanish were able to seize the upper hand and define – or invent – both the other and themselves at the same time, discursively.

In this dissertation, Mignolo’s notions are particularly relevant. The Spanish were able to define themselves as “with history” and the natives as “without history.” Of course, they assumed the natives had history, but had been unable to accurately record it, unlike the Spanish. As we shall see in later
chapters, the colonial difference between those with and those without history created a gap of sorts, a blank space where the Spanish could invent the natives without fear of any real contradiction. The first efforts to fill that space were earnest attempts to find the truth about the past of the New World, but later historians viewed this gap as an opportunity to discredit native rule, allowing Europe to believe that they were doing the right thing by continuing to occupy the New World.

Post-colonialism and history

For the modern Latin Americanist, the works of Mignolo, Rabasa, Said, and other post-colonialists can be immensely useful, and indeed they are. These writers have tended to focus, however, on the invention of power structures relating to such things as memory, space, imagery, and history. What has been missing from these postcolonial theories is a close look at how the creation and interpretation of native history contributed to the marginalization of native cultures in Latin America. It is my purpose in this dissertation to create such an interpretation, which would complement the works done by these other writers.

The concept of an invented America – a vision of a New World that had less to do with native indigenous reality and more to do with European norms, religion, and expectations – is central to my study of the literature of the colonial period. In this study, I will attempt to shed some light upon how two separate but related concepts of American history – origins and political history – were twisted
into a negative invention of the New World natives for the purposes of justifying, discursively, their enslavement and forced conversion. I will return frequently to the notion of invention and how an unflattering self-definition was forced upon the Native Americans.

In my studies of post-colonialism and colonial texts, this is one area that I repeatedly found to be lacking in analysis. Many modern writers, seeking clues to the present, have looked for them in the colonial past. However, none have yet examined the question of the definition or invention of the New World subject through European discourse relating to their Old World origins or political history. I have found, in the course of my study, that the consideration of exactly such an invention is relevant and illuminating, and in this dissertation I address this lack of analysis.

When people ask me about my dissertation, I often tell them about one of the main writers I study, Gregorio García. To summarize all of García’s work in a nutshell, he sought to determine the European, African, and/or Asian ancestry of the New World natives. A little-known colonial era writer, he is best appreciated today for helping to decipher one of the few remaining Mexican codices. His science is outdated, his conclusions often unfounded, and modern academia has relegated him to the ‘trash heap,’ as it were, of colonial texts of minimal value. His project, based in part on a literal reading of the Bible and the ancients, was doomed to fail – in the sense that the answers he was seeking were incompatible with the conclusions reached by these ancient sources, which he refused to contradict.
My friends and family are sometimes confused about why I would dedicate so much time to a writer, dead now for 400 years, who wrote an entire book which has been completely disproved by subsequent study. But by applying a counter-colonial reading to García, I found him to be a priceless resource in the writing of this dissertation, in part because as an organized and talented writer, he so eloquently defends the establishment of racism through historical identity discourse in the New World.

The value of colonial texts no longer resides in the conclusions they reach. Like Rabasa, I do not seek to deride or judge these works as ‘wrong.’ Certainly, in many ways, they were. Today, we do not believe that the New World was colonized by one or more of the biblical ten lost tribes of Israel. Nor do we believe the conclusions reached by such writers as García, who asserted that proof of lost tribe parentage was to be found in the fact that Indians as well as Jews are liars and cowards. García’s “facts” have been debunked long ago.

Rather, the value of these works lies in the process of arriving at the conclusions that these writers went through. I do not judge these writers for being “wrong” – rather, I am fascinated by “why” they may have been wrong, and how their “wrong” answers always seemed to benefit the Spanish at the expense of the Indians. What did García’s peers think of his work? Was he really incorrect at the time? Or did he aid and promote Spanish policies in the New World, making life easier for his king and for those Spanish citizens who were concerned about the Spanish project in the New World? I am intrigued by García not because he incorrectly reached the conclusion that most of the New World natives were
Israelite, Carthaginian, or Ophirian in origin, but because he selected those three races as progenitors of the New World peoples. In 1600, García had the benefit of dozens of previously posited theories that all attempted to explain New World origins, yet he selected those three. Why?

My answer, elaborated at length later in this dissertation3, is that those three races had traits (from a racist point of view) that García attempted to link to the Indians. It is for these reasons that I have rescued García from the “trash heap” of history, where he had been relegated since cultural sciences such as anthropology and archaeology proved him to be incorrect in his theories.

Rabasa, in returning to these ancient texts and approaching them with a re-reading designed to root out hidden patterns of domination, seeks to debunk traditional colonial studies and its emphasis on superficial readings of colonial texts. In this dissertation, I attempt to build upon the work done by Rabasa, O’Gorman, Said and the other post-colonialists. I will attempt to identify racist principles that were founded on the colonization of subjectivity that took place during the period in question. The natives were assigned their subjectivity, their roles in the worldview held by Spain at that time. Their placement in this role had much more to do with the Spanish than with the natives themselves. I attempt to identify this subjectivity, determine why the Indians were assigned this role, and question what effect this might have had on native identity. It is my belief that I can arrive at this invented place through a study of the literature that compared

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3 See chapter four of this dissertation for a complete analysis of García and his work.
Indians with certain Old World races through the process I name *ethno-historical association*.

**Ethno-historical association**

Ethno-historical association is a form of allegoresis, or creation of mythic history. It is the process by which an ethnological identity is falsely attributed to a certain group. It is a concept that is central to this dissertation, and as it did not exist before, I needed to invent it in order to be able to make myself clear. In this dissertation, it refers to the process of associating the New World natives with a variety of Old World peoples and cultures. Some races so referenced, such as Israelites, Greeks, etc., were ones known to the Spanish. Some races were utterly contrived – Atlanteans or Ophirians – and others were races known but poorly understood by the Europeans (such as the Chinese or Japanese). In all of the cases I consider here, these ethno-historical associations were eventually proved false, and all were constructed on prejudices and ignorance.

Considering the ethno-historical associations that took place in the early colonial period is not about finding the truth, however. It is not my intention to “correct” centuries-old writers who wrote about similarities between Jews and Andeans, such as the notion that both cultures were idolatrous. I am interested in why these associations took place and what role they played in the invention of the New World natives. “Truth” is a slippery notion when discussing the colonial
era: these associations took on a truth of their own – people in power believed them, and therefore these falsehoods had very real consequences. With these associations came expectations, not only for the Indians but for the Spanish as well. If Indians were descended from Jews, they must be converted – and that task fell to the Spanish, who believed that God himself had chosen them for this holy duty.

A study of these associations yields much about what was knowledge, and how it could be authorized, validated, and even enforced, even in cases where the “facts” were quite incorrect. In this way, knowledge and history became little more than tools of the Spanish colonial enterprise, as native reality was forced to contort and conform to European expectations, which, as I will show in this dissertation, rarely had the best interests of the Americans at heart. They say that history is written by the winners; what I seek to show here in this dissertation is how the writing of history helped establish who the winners would be.

In my studies of Latin American History and Literature, I have found that although much has been said about the “invention” of America, too little attention has been paid to the construction of New World native subjectivity through the discourse of history. I began this dissertation by being curious about the ten lost tribes of Israel theory. I asked myself, why would anyone suspect that the New World natives were Jews? I have spent five years answering that question: my answers are before you. Many writers and theorists, notably Edmundo O’Gorman, José Rabasa and Sara Castro-Klarén, have come close to
asking the same questions as I have in this work, but they all eventually took
different paths. My work is original, completely my own, and fills a gap in our
understanding of hegemonic discourses of history written during the first century
or so of the Spanish colonial period.

For convenience, I have divided my study chronologically. The colonial
period in Latin America is marked by shifts in thought and philosophy, as well as
a constant battle between apologists for the conquest (those who believed that the
Spanish conquest and occupation of the New World was fair and just) and the
reformers (who felt that the natives were being denied their basic rights). As the
colonial period progressed, the balance of power between the apologists and the
reformers was in constant flux.

Chapter one deals with what I deem *The Age of Discovery*, 1492 to 1521.
1492, of course, marks the beginning of the Spanish colonial period with
Columbus’ ’discovery’ of America, but it is also important because of events in
Spain, including the defeat of the Moors and the expulsion of the Jews. 1521
marks several important events, including the Magellan expedition, which
traveled around the world and conclusively proved that the New World was not,
in fact, part of Asia. It also marks Cortés’ defeat of the Aztec empire, the
beginning of the Protestant Revolution and the approximate date of the coronation
of Charles V as Holy Roman Emperor.

As for invention, the age of discovery is important because it was during
this time frame that the first discursive and legal constructions of indigenous
subjectivity took place. They were subjects both in the sense of an other that could be defined and subjects of the Spanish crown. Writer/explorers such as Columbus and Amerigo Vespucci were enormously popular in Spain and as the first to invent the New World natives, they were very influential in the process of invention/construction that I analyze here. In particular, the imagery they presented of the natives was that of innocents in an Eden, and it became the basis for the noble savage archetype being applied to American subjectivity.

Chapter Two picks up where Chapter One left off. It concerns the age of conquest and reform, 1521-1556. The end date refers to the abdication of Charles V in favor of his son, Philip II. This second period of time in the colonial era was marked by the most violent conquests of the modern era, as the mighty Aztec and Inca Empires were defeated by the Spanish. It was a time of great abuses and horrors and yet also a time of reform. The reform movement, which sought improved living conditions for the New World natives, bloomed during this time under the great defender of the Indies, Bartolomé de Las Casas.

In Chapter Two, I consider the progression of the establishment and invention of native legal subjectivity that took place under Charles V: it was during his reign that serious questions about the New World natives and their legal rights under the colonial system were put forth by reformers. I also focus on the various difficulties faced by Charles V and how he tried to solve them. I also take a look at the reform movement, led by Bartolomé de Las Casas.

The literature of this period is marked by the creating of several histories, including influential works by Pedro Cieza de León and Agustín de
Zárate. I consider the history contained in these works, and also consider important reform literature, such as Las Casas’ *Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*.

Chapter Three covers the period of time between 1556 and 1581, the end date representing the end of the time of rule of Viceroy Francisco de Toledo in Peru. This period of time is marked by many difficulties for Philip II, including Protestant rebellions, attacks by Muslim forces in the Mediterranean and wars with England, France and the Netherlands. I will show that these pressures combined to make costly reforms in the New World impossible. Although the reforms were too costly, the reformers still pressed their case, and a new invention of the native was needed to continue to justify the Spanish presence in the New World.

Viceroy Toledo delivered just that: as we shall see, writers working for Toledo were able to write histories of the New World that supported a continued Spanish presence and rule in the colonies. This “new” history of the New World – and the Andes in particular – masked a deliberate effort to re-construct native subjectivity in such a way that it cast the Spanish occupation in a positive light. I take a close look at texts written by Toledo himself as well as those writers he had in his employ.

Chapter Four examines two late writers: José de Acosta and Gregorio García. Both of them wrote about origins, and their works were completed just seventeen years apart (Acosta in 1590 and García in 1607). Both men examined the leading origin theories of the day and weighed in with their opinions. I will
show in chapter four that both men (Garcia in particular) reached conclusions about native identity that were highly prejudicial to the New World natives. I will also demonstrate my belief that they were guided by a misplaced desire to help the natives turn their back on idolatry.

Chapter five, the final chapter of this work, will show the indigenous response to the origin and history-inventing activities of the Spanish. In this section, I will rely mostly on the work of Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, a Peruvian Indian who wrote an extended letter to the King of Spain in 1615. In this letter/book, he re-invents Andean history – and therefore native character – in order to portray his people in a more positive light, so that the king will accept his offer of a re-structuring of the colonial system.

Guaman Poma’s book is very useful to this study, because among his goals was a complete re-invention of Andean history, one that contradicted the existing one created by the Spanish in the previous century. By closely examining Guaman Poma’s re-invention and comparing it to the works of other writers at the time, we arrive at a very clear picture of the insidious racism that had become a part of the debate over the history and origin of the New World natives. Guaman Poma was keenly aware of the invention taking place in the histories of the New World and he realized that the only way to combat this invention was to meet the Spanish on their own ground, the written word. He even addressed himself to the question of origins, answering the ethno-historical association of his people initiated by the Spanish.
Overall, I will show how the debate over the origin and history of the New World natives went from being a purely academic debate to one that had great stakes for those involved in the colonial enterprise. The tumultuous process of the constant re-positioning of subject positions whose “delineation,” and whose “self-conscious” discursive construction, began with the first meetings between the European colonizer and his American Other and continue into our actual Post-Colonial reality.
CHAPTER 1: THE AGE OF DISCOVERY: 1492-1521

…they are very simple and honest, and exceedingly liberal with all they have: none of them refusing any thing he may possess when he is asked for it, but on the contrary inviting us to ask them. They exhibit great love towards all others in preference to themselves: they also give objects of great value for trifles, and content themselves with very little or nothing in return…Thus they bartered like idiots cotton and gold for fragments of bows, glasses, bottles and jars; which I forbad as being unjust, and myself gave them many beautiful and acceptable articles which I had brought with me, taking nothing in return; I did this in order that I might the more easily conciliate them, that they might be led to become Christians, and be inclined to entertain a regard for the King and Queen and all Spaniards…They practice no kind of idolatry, but have a firm belief that all strength and power, and indeed all good things, are in
heaven, and that I had descended from thence with these ships and sailors 4.

-Christopher Columbus


Columbus’ description of the natives of the island he called “Juana,” now known as Cuba, is one of the first descriptions ever of the inhabitants of the New World. As he describes them for his readers, Columbus is setting off down a certain path, a path down which many Europeans will follow him. He is describing the Other for his readers, and thus sealing the fate of the New World natives: many would follow in Columbus’ footsteps to take advantage of or Christianize the simple, honest, generous, idiotic natives of the New World.

I refer to the period of time between 1492 and 1521 as the “Age of Discovery” because it marked the beginning of a cultural contact and conflict that would forever change the course of the history of humanity. The “bookend” years of this period are quite important. In 1492, about midway through the rule of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, Spain became politically unified when Christian forces defeated the final Moorish stronghold on the peninsula, Granada. During their reign, Spain went from an unruly collection of independent kingdoms to a budding world power. They set their young kingdom on the path to Empire, and it was they who set into action the momentous events of 1492.

4 From a letter addressed to Lord Rafael Sanchez, royal treasurer. Columbus wrote it during or shortly after his first voyage to the New World (Columbus 2005, 7-8).
Spain also became religiously unified in the same year with the expulsion of the Jews. And, of course, Spain became owner of the New World because of the journey of Christopher Columbus.

1521 is equally important. It is the year that the Magellan expedition returned from the first round-the-world trip, proving conclusively what many had already suspected: that Columbus had not, in fact, found a new route to Asia; he had found something totally new. The Protestant revolution would shake all of Christendom, and the Cortés expedition showed Spain that there were wealthy (and socially complex) kingdoms on the continents of the New World.

This dissertation is about the invention of the New World native through literature. The tumultuous state of Spanish reality at the time is impossible to ignore: “Neither space nor subjectivity is free-floating: they are mutually interdependent and complexly structured entities. The interest in returning to the ideological underpinnings of the very notion of the subject is that it turns attention to the ways in which subjectivities are produced under very particular circumstances” (Probyn 298). In other words, the complicated situation in Spain – religious fanaticism, euphoria at the completion of the reconquest, optimism under the new rulers, reliance on ancient history and more – contributed to the literature, and thus to invention.

The Age of Discovery was a crucial time for this invention. The natives were invented legally, socially and spiritually during this time – without their knowledge of any of it. In this chapter, we will look at this invention. The first part of this chapter is a brief introduction to the politics and realities of the young
kingdom of Spain at the close of the fifteenth century. This section is important for understanding the context of the inventions that would take place.

The second part of this chapter concerns the interpellation of the New World natives as legal entities. According to Pope Alexander VI, the inhabitants of the New World became semi-citizens of Spain, but the bulls and decrees from Rome were somewhat vague, forcing Spain to wrestle with a more specific and practical definition of native and Spanish rights in the New World.

The third part of this chapter concerns literature, in this case mainly letters from the earliest explorers of the New World. When the Americas were discovered, the question of the origins and history of the natives came into question. In the last part of this chapter, I briefly discuss some of the traditional influences on these writer-sailors before addressing questions of origins and political history. The longest lasting subject position created “for” the natives in/by Spanish/European discourse from the Age of Discovery would be that of the ‘noble savage.’ As is evident in the quote that opens this chapter, the noble savage possesses an inherent honesty and dignity, even as he shows the most barbaric of customs.

The inventions of the New World natives that date from the Age of Discovery are very important to consider when examining their overall invention. Those who went first set the precedent for what was to come: any later social, legal or spiritual invention of the natives would have to either support or contradict these early writers and explorers.
Spain in 1492

In 1492, the Christian people of Spain – nobles, middle class and peasants alike – had reason to be euphoric. Their rulers, Ferdinand and Isabella, had unified the quarrelling regions and cities, bringing stability with them. Trade was booming. The country was united under Catholicism: the last Moorish stronghold, Granada, had fallen, bringing to an end centuries of reconquest. The despised Jews had been forced to convert or driven out. There was even a Spanish pope (Alexander VI, papacy lasted from 1492 to 1503).

And then, of course, there was the fantastic grandeur of the New World. In 1492, Columbus sailed the ocean blue – and when he came back, he brought with him news of fascinating discoveries to the west. He and his men told tales of lush plants and vegetation, noble chiefs, naked women and…gold. Columbus informed his patrons that there was unimaginable gold in the New World. The vast hoards of it had eluded Columbus, but he knew it was there. The cities of gold had always been on the next island, up the next river, around the next bend. Gold that would make Spain mighty above any other empire, in the dawning sixteenth century or in history. Gold that would free Jerusalem from the heathens. Gold that showed, without a doubt, that God himself felt that Spain’s time had come to lead the Christian world to its shining destiny.

To understand the Spain of 1492, it is necessary to backtrack a little first.

In 1469, Ferdinand and Isabella, who were to become known as the Catholic
Monarchs, wed. Ferdinand was heir to the thrones of Aragón, Catalonia, Valencia and Mallorca, and although Isabella only brought the kingdom of Castile to the royal union, it was by far the largest kingdom of the lot, with an estimated 80% of the population of their new united kingdom (Kamen 7). Within a few years, their elders on the various thrones of Spain died off and together they ruled a young nation that was more united than it had been since Roman rule.

The young monarchs had ambitious plans for their nation5. The first task on their list was the unification – religious and political – of Spain. In 711, Islamic forces, fed by the fervor of their new-found religion, swept into Spain, conquering much of the peninsula. In 1085, Alonso VI conquered the Moorish city of Toledo, launching the reconquest – a centuries-long effort by Christians to claim the Iberian Peninsula for their own. The reconquest stalled in 1248 after Christian forces took the city of Seville. For centuries there was an uneasy peace, but in 1482 the young Catholic Monarchs decided to attack Granada, the last Moorish stronghold on the peninsula. After years of battles and siege, the city finally fell in 1492.

With the Muslims gone, only the Jews remained as a minority religion in the land. When the Jews were forced to leave or convert, Spain was more united than it had ever been. It is a bit simplistic to say that the Catholic Monarchs ruled over a united Spain – the different kingdoms retained different laws, nobles, and

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5 Ferdinand and Isabela accomplished much during their time as rulers of Spain, and their story is a fascinating one. Due to space constraints, I can only include information about their rule that corresponds to the main point of my dissertation, namely the invention of the New World natives in regards to their origins and political history. Several excellent books are available for further reading about the Catholic monarchs: one that I found particularly enlightening is *Isabel the Queen: Life and Times*, by Peggy K. Liss.
administrative systems, and there was a certain amount of rivalry and animosity among them – but because Ferdinand and Isabella (and the regions they represented) were able to work together, they accomplished a great deal, and when Ferdinand died in 1516 (Isabella had predeceased him in 1504), their grandson Charles was accepted as legitimate heir to all of the kingdoms of his grandparents.

Given that the Catholic monarchs provided Spain with the aforementioned sense of unity that had not been felt for centuries, it is not surprising that they were very popular rulers:

The achievements of the Spanish rulers soon became legendary. Through collaboration between their respective crowns, they laid the basis for the emergence of a political community that chroniclers termed ‘Spain’ or ‘the Spains.’ They brought an end to the civil dissension that had torn the peninsula apart and diverted the militant spirit of the nobles into foreign wars. Above all, they laid the foundations of expansion overseas. (Kamen 8-9)

At the same time, a well-regarded Genoese sea captain arrived at the Spanish court with an interesting proposition for the Catholic Monarchs. His name was Christopher Columbus, and he was a skilled explorer and navigator. He believed that it was possible to travel west to Asia, shortening the routes of the lucrative spice trade. Columbus had already pitched his ideas unsuccessfully in
Portugal and England. Ferdinand and Isabella took a chance on Columbus and sent him west in 1492 with three ships. The rest, as they say, is history: Columbus returned with news of land to the west and although he still incorrectly believed that he had found Asia, he had set in motion the greatest clash of cultures the world would ever see.

The unification of Spain, the defeat of the last Muslim kingdom on the peninsula, the expulsion of the Jews and the discovery of the New World gave birth to an unprecedented feeling of optimism and pride in the young nation. There were many whose optimism took the form of millenarism, which was the belief, growing in Europe, that a new millennium, or divine golden age, was nearing. Many believed that God was guiding the people of the world towards this new millennium and that when everyone on the planet had embraced Christianity, the new age would begin. The Franciscan order, in particular, believed that Christ would come again when certain events had happened on earth (Burkholder and Johnson, 93). Events in Spain, such as the defeat of the Moors and the expulsion of the Jews, seemed to prove to many that God’s plan was being enacted on earth. What was happening in Spain, in other words, was nothing less than a continuation of sacred and biblical history into the present.

Millenarist beliefs were not a vast stretch from existing norms and beliefs at the time. Many in Spain had seen the reconquest as a continuation of the crusades: “The notion of a ‘crusade,’ backed up by the papacy, helped to convince them that their cause alone was just, and that the enemy ‘infidels’ deserved no quarter. From 1488 many of the Spanish soldiers wore crusaders...
crosses on their uniform, and a huge silver cross (sent to Ferdinand by the pope) was carried before the troops.” (Kamen 15)

The belief that God was favoring Spain went all the way to the top. Queen Isabella, in particular, believed that she had a part to play in the divine plan for the world: “…to Isabel the divine will revealed itself through history, and Spain’s story itself represented a continuation of sacred, biblical history.” (Liss 174). When she gave birth to a male heir, Prince Don Juan6, many interpreted it as a sign from God and Isabella was not inclined to disagree:

Unquestionably, Isabel sanctioned the vision of her reign and its successes then being put forth so exuberantly, and she welcomed the interpretations of what her son’s birth portended. Whatever the timetable of God’s universal design, she clearly evidenced that as queen she was determined to further it, that it was incumbent upon her to get Castile ready, which involved purifying the land. (Kamen 175)

Even the more pragmatic Ferdinand held a belief in prophecy: he often listened to the spiritual advice of a holy woman known as the “Beata de Piedrahita” (Kamen 45). Christopher Columbus was also a millennarist. Events such as the expulsion of the Moors from Spain proved to Columbus that a new age was dawning, and he fit himself into this tradition nicely, comparing himself to heroes such as Jason (of the Argonauts). As José Rabasa points out, “…the

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6 Prince Don Juan later married but died childless at the age of 19 in 1497.
enterprise and its manufacturer become the master code for interpreting all possible prefigurations of the discovery.” (Rabasa 1993a 80). On several occasions, Columbus reiterated the fact that he believed that God himself had selected him to discover the New World. From a letter he wrote to the nurse of the young Prince John in 1500: “God made me the messenger of the new heaven and the new earth, of which He spoke in the Apocalypse by St. John, after having spoken of it by the mouth of Isaiah; and he showed me the spot where to find it.” (Columbus 2005 148)

Columbus’ view of gold is a valuable indicator of how he saw the world. For Columbus, gold was more than merely a pretty metal that could be used as a currency: it was a way to quantify divine favor: “For Columbus, gold was more prized than any other thing, because in his view it was the one commodity which no one would wish to exchange for any other.” (Pagden 1993b 27) Columbus felt that if he carried out the will of God, he would be rewarded with gold in this life and with heaven in the next. When his new discoveries turned out to be profitable, he saw this as further proof that God had actively led him to the New World. Gold, to Columbus, was a sort of currency that you could spend with God: “Gold is the most precious of commodities; gold constitutes treasure, and he who possesses it has all he needs in this world, as also the means of rescuing souls from purgatory, and restoring them to the enjoyment of paradise.” (Columbus 2005 196)

Columbus also felt that the gold of the New World could be used to liberate Jerusalem from the infidels. “Throughout his life Columbus exhorted
Ferdinand and Isabella, and the Pope, to the further propagation of the faith and even the reconquest of Jerusalem from the infidels in a new crusade. The gold he sought in the New World...was to serve as the endowment of this Christian mission.” (Romm 30-31)

Even the much more down-to-earth Amerigo Vespucci mentioned God as an active agent of events on earth, even if he seems to imply that the king may be of somewhat more immediate importance: “On this voyage I think I will accomplish many things to the praise of God, the benefit of this kingdom, and the honor of my old age, and I await nothing but the consent of His Most Serene Highness. May God permit whatever is for the best.” (56)

Millenarism and the belief that God had taken an active hand in the discovery of the New World would become key to the process of the invention of the native. The Spanish assumed that God had “given” them the New World (and all of the people in it) for a reason, and many of Spain’s best thinkers would spend the next century trying to figure out that reason. Many assumed that God wanted Spain to “save” the natives. Since Spain was playing the biblical role of hero and rescuer of those deceived by the devil, what role would the natives play? Too often, the role assigned to them in this grand divine drama was that of victim, enemy, or foolish dupe who needed to be cleansed of the influence of the devil. When all was said and done, assigning the place of the natives in this divine plan would come to constitute their most lasting and negative depictions.
For many, the time of Ferdinand and Isabella was a prosperous one. For others, however, the time of the Catholic monarchs was not so happy. Jews and Muslims, who had lived in Spain for centuries, found themselves increasingly marginalized.

In the eighth century, Muslim forces from North Africa conquered Spain and ruled much of the peninsula for centuries. From 1085 – the date when Alfonso VI conquered the city of Toledo, launching the reconquest – the fortunes of Muslims in Spain began to decline. Muslim principalities and kingdoms began to fall one by one. The reconquest had stopped for a time in 1248 when Christian forces captured Seville, but in 1482, the Catholic monarchs set out to conquer Granada, the final Muslim holdout on the peninsula. After years of battles and siege, the city fell in 1492. The terms of the peace treaty allowed for limited freedom of religion, but in spite of promises of tolerance, all Muslims in Spain were forced to convert or leave in 1504.

In spite of the victory at Granada, fear of Moors and Islam remained high in Spain, partly due to the proximity of Muslim lands to the south:

Queen Isabella’s ardent desire to conquer the kingdom of Granada was not due solely to ambition for completing the Reconquest; which is to say, of putting an end to the rule of a foreign, non-Christian people on the Spanish peninsula...unless the onset of further African invasions were forestalled, the Peninsula would be in constant peril. Therefore she tried to dominate likewise the part
of North Africa where many of the Muslims leaving Spain took refuge and where there was always a popular disposition to renew efforts to regain the lost Spanish possessions. (Altamira 272)

After the fall of Granada, those Muslims that elected to convert and remain in Spain were referred to as Moriscos. Converting did not greatly improve their situation, as racism and discrimination continued. Morisco rebellions were commonplace for a century, and eventually even the Moriscos would be forced out of Spain, as we will see later in this dissertation.

Spanish Jews found themselves in a similar position to that of Spanish Muslims in the same period. Jews had lived in Spain for centuries and prospered under Muslim rule during the late Middle Ages. As the Reconquest progressed, these Jews found themselves living in Christian lands. For the most part, a (very) uneasy truce existed between Jews, Muslims, and Christians at this time. Jews held valued positions as moneylenders, physicians and tax-collectors, among other professions.

As valuable as the Jews were to Spanish society, they always lived on the margins and were never fully trusted by the Christians. In 1391, stirred up by inflammatory speeches, the Christian populace rose up and turned on their Jewish neighbors, killing thousands (Ruiz 98). Many more were forced to convert. These Jews became known as conversos. In the next few decades, Jews became even more marginalized in Christian lands. By the 1480’s, they were a
fragmented society, at odds even with each other, as there was a growing animosity between Jews who had not converted and the *conversos*.

Spanish Jews were between a rock and a hard place: “…exile often led to significant loss of property, and conversion entailed life as a second-class citizen, always under the careful watch of the Inquisition and the endless suspicion of neighbors.” (Ruiz 94) On March 31, 1492, the Jews were officially expelled from Spain: part of the official reason being that possible contact with practicing Jews would cause *conversos* to relapse. Many Jews did, in fact, relapse after their conversion and continued to practice their religion in private. These people became known as *crypto-Jews* and could be found on both sides of the Atlantic.

Those who did not leave were forced to convert, but that often did not end their problems. The Inquisition, since its establishment by Ferdinand in 1478, had always been very diligent in their search for relapsed *conversos*, persecuting them at every turn. By 1492, the Inquisition had discovered about thirteen thousand *conversos* guilty of practicing Judaism (Liss 299).

Spanish society, therefore, was one that was used to social classes being linked to race and religion. There was already a hegemony in place: those Spaniards who did not have any Jewish or Moorish blood on top, followed by those Jews and Moors that had chosen to convert, and with practicing Jews, Moors, slaves (and gypsies) on the bottom. After 1492, the entire bottom rung

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7 After their expulsion from Spain, many Jews found refuge in Portugal for a time. King John II (1481-1495) of Portugal welcomed the Jews, as many of them had useful skills. The Jews were expelled from Portugal by John’s successor Manuel I (1495-1521), however. Many Jews went to the New World from Portugal during this time. (Burkholder and Johnson, 29-30)
(except for gypsies and slaves) was removed from Spanish societies: it would be replaced by crypto-Jews and Moors who continued to practice their religion in secret.

The fragmented Spanish society was therefore ready to create a new social classification for the New World natives: “The concept of ‘hegemony’ will emerge precisely in a context dominated by the experience of fragmentation and by the indeterminacy of the articulation between different struggles and different subject positions” (Laclau y Mouffe 13). The situation in Spain was partly the result of poor communication between social classes: the same thing would happen in the New World.

The Spain that sent Columbus west in 1492 was an optimistic young nation that already believed it was playing a role in God’s divine plan. Hegemonic Christian subjects were already actively defining their own subject positions in relation to/ in contrast with those of their subaltern Others, and the “colonial desire” identified by Bhabha was already a driving force for this process of self-definition. When the New World was discovered, it only reinforced this belief. One of the first questions that came out of this period was that of native rights, which we will consider it the next section.
The legal invention of the Americans

Slavery was big business in fifteenth-century Europe. Under established norms, enemy combatants taken in battle could be enslaved and sold:

“…everyone in the West understood that whenever one set out to conquer barbarian lands or defeated a nation that had been purposely declared an enemy so as to subjugate it, the invader could obtain reimbursement for his war expenses and celebrate the glories of his adventure by enslaving his victims.” (Arciniegas 98) The Portuguese were particularly known for their skills as slavers: their practices in Africa were endorsed and sanctioned by the Pope. Certain nations and peoples were fair game and others weren’t: Turkish pirates captured in the Mediterranean could be enslaved, but no Spaniard would consider taking French slaves after one of the many wars the two countries fought. The same was true for both sides: Muslim forces enslaved enemy Christian combatants just as often. It was a firmly established precedent.

When the New World was discovered, the first instinct of the explorers and settlers was to take slaves, especially if the natives had put up any sort of resistance. Christopher Columbus himself brought slaves back to Europe on his voyages and sold some of them. Early on, however, Queen Isabella and King Ferdinand began to get a little bit uneasy about the legality and morality of enslaving their new subjects. Their doubts lit the fuse of one of the colonial period’s greatest debates: what, exactly, were the rights of the New World natives under Spanish rule?
After the discovery was announced, Ferdinand and Isabella hastened to secure a papal bull that would grant them sovereignty over the newly-discovered lands to the west. Pope Alexander VI granted them one. The papal decree was somewhat vague in terms of what the rights of the inhabitants of these lands would be. The Spanish were given the responsibility to Christianize and educate the natives, but the bull was not much more specific than that.

The question first came to a head between 1494 and 1495. Christopher Columbus had brought back seven captives with him after his first voyage in 1492. Five of them died; only two survived. They were not slaves so much as animals in a zoo: they were for the education and amusement of the Spanish royal court. “The writer is placed either above or at the center of things, yet apart from them, so that the organization and classification of things takes place according to the writer’s own system of value. Interpretation of the scene reflects the circumspective force of the gaze, while suppressing the answering gaze of the other” (Spurr 16-17). Although Spurr is talking about writing, the principle is the same: the Spanish nobles who gawked at Columbus’ natives never paused to consider the natives’ view of their situation: never meeting the “gaze” of the slaves, as it were.

On his second voyage, however, he began sending back New World slaves for sale in Spain. Columbus had high hopes for a lucrative slave trade in

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8 Portugal had a previous claim to all land to the west in the Atlantic, but Alexander VI granted the lands discovered by Columbus to Spain. Portugal protested, and in 1494 the treaty of Tordesillas granted Spain title to lands further than 370 leagues west of the Azores. This gave Portugal claim to Brazil, which had yet to be discovered.
the lands that the Catholic majesties had granted to him: it was one way to make the voyages profitable, especially because the large hoards of gold the natives kept telling him was “just on the next island” were proving very elusive.

In January of 1494, Columbus was on his second voyage and busy setting up a settlement in the New World. He sent one of his captains, Antonio de Torres, back to Spain to ask for, among other things, more supplies to be sent as soon as possible. In the missive, Columbus suggests a trade route in which slaves of the Carib tribes – warlike islanders who fought off Spanish attempts to capture them – could be traded for cattle. Columbus, seeming to somehow uneasily anticipate the reservations that the king and queen would later have, broaches the matter rather delicately:

You will tell their highnesses, that for the good of the souls of the said cannibals…the thought has suggested itself to us, that the greater the number that are sent over to Spain the better…considering what great need we have of cattle and beasts of burden, both for food and to assist the settlers with their work…these cattle…might be paid with slaves, taken from among the Carribbees, who are a wild people, fit for any work, well proportioned and intelligent, and who, when they have got rid of the cruel habits to which they have become accustomed, will be better than any other kind of slaves. When they lose sight of their country, they will forget their cruel customs; and it will be easy to
obtain plenty of these savages by means of row boats that we propose to build. (Columbus 2005 84-85)

It’s a winning situation for everyone! The settlers get to eat, the “wild” Carribbees get to become civilized and Columbus gets to broker the whole deal. The royal response to Columbus was a bit less enthusiastic, however: “The consideration of this subject has been suspended for a time, until some other measure may be suggested with reference to the island.” (Columbus 2005 85) Although the enslavement of enemy combatants was an established practice, apparently the Spanish crown was having qualms about the New World, which was not really an ‘enemy’ in the traditional sense, after all.

Columbus’ wording of his explanation seems to indicate that he knows the Catholic monarchs, and perhaps Isabella in particular, were not going to like it. Isabella had already warned him to treat her new subjects carefully:

From the outset, Isabel did not want the Indians enslaved – instructions of 1493 to Columbus had been to treat them lovingly; yet she did want to make use of Indian labor to mine gold and maintain the Spanish presence in newly conquered lands. Her solution was to have the natives become Christian and to impose the principle that they were royal subjects; to be treated as such by resident Europeans...she did think they could become civilized if brought to Spanish ways and faith, which, as she construed them,
were inseparable. Together they were the aim of a civilizing mission that served as justification for Spanish dominion in the Indies, as in accord with the papal confirmation. (Liss 342)

The decision eventually went against Columbus and his ideas about the New World as a potential source of slaves. On June 20, 1495, the monarchs issued a decree stating that all natives sent over by Columbus and sold were to be returned to their homes. The monarchs had concluded that the people of the Americas could not be enslaved, at least in the traditional manner.

This, of course, raised the question of the legal rights of natives and the Spanish in the New World. The papal grants of 1493 were not specific as to native rights. In 1501 another papal decree granted Ferdinand and Isabella the right to tithes in the New World, on the condition that they take responsibility for the Catholic education and baptism of all natives in their care. This decree would seem to imply that the natives would have similar rights to those enjoyed by the Spanish. As for slavery, the monarchs retreated somewhat from their initial stance: in 1503, Isabella allowed certain bellicose Caribbean tribe members to be taken as slaves, as they resisted Spanish attempts at evangelization and colonization (Liss, 343).

In 1502, the Spanish crown sent Nicolás de Ovando to the New World as governor. By 1505, Ovando had introduced the encomienda system as a way for managing the New World and its inhabitants. Under the encomienda system, which was copied from the traditional reconquest practice of placing newly lands
newly “liberated” from Muslims under the care of a loyal knight or military commander, colonial officials and conquistadores were given huge tracts of land. It became their responsibility to Christianize the natives, who, in turn, would provide the labor needed to run the estate. It had the benefit of organizing the chaos that had been the hallmark of the early colonial period, and it effectively put an end to the slavery. But the encomienda system had its own evils, as ruthless encomenderos worked their subjects to death and exploited them mercilessly. Later Spanish rulers such as Charles V and Philip II would rue the day their predecessors allowed the encomienda system to take root in the New World.

For a while, the question of native rights lay dormant, and stayed that way until abuse of the natives reached such staggering proportions that someone had to say something. In the final days of 1511, Antonio de Montesinos, a Dominican friar, gave a scathing sermon on the island of Hispaniola in which he sharply criticized the actions of the Spanish conquerors and colonizers. He went beyond the atrocities and questioned the legal rights of the Spanish in the New World, raising for the first time the question of dominio. Dominio is the legal concept of ‘domain’ or ‘jurisdiction’ as it applied to the Spanish. Montesinos felt that the Spanish had attacked and subjugated an independent people without provocation (Pagden 1991 33). “With what right, and with what justice do you keep these poor Indians in such cruel and horrible servitude? By what authority have you made such detestable wars against these people who lived peacefully and gently on their own lands?” he allegedly asked (Pagden 1992 xxi).
By what right indeed. Although Montesinos was reprimanded, the question had been raised. It turned out that there was no such right in the original papal grants: “Although the papal grant might confer sovereignty over the New World upon the Catholic monarchs, it did not convey property rights over the persons or lands of its inhabitants. These…remained theirs by natural right. Nor did it entirely deprive the native rulers of their political authority.” (Pagden 1992 xvi.)

Even if the grant had been more specific, not everyone was comfortable with the notion of the pope “donating” lands that might be sovereign to any other power: “These bulls were grounded on the papal assumption of ‘plenitude of power’, meaning temporal authority over both Christians and pagans, an assumption that had no basis in natural law and about which the lawyers and the theologians were known to be uneasy.” (Cervantes 8) Theologians were split on the issue of whether or not the pope had any temporal authority.

In the face of these lingering doubts, King Ferdinand asked two distinguished jurists, Matías de Paz and Juán López de Palacios Rubios, to consider the question of dominio. The two men concluded that Spain did, in fact, have authority in the Indies, effectively answering the question. They based their judgment upon the ancient Roman concept that all society is based upon ownership and control of land. Since the New World natives did not claim their islands as their property, the Spanish did not have to respect their property rights: “Sus tierras no eran sus tierras, sino simplemente unos espacios abiertos en que ellos vivían de forma absolutamente casual.” (Pagden 1991 34) (“Their lands
were not *their* lands, but rather some open spaces in which they happened to be living in a totally casual way.”

They also supported the notion that the pope had every right to give the New World natives to Spain.

As for slavery, Palacios Rubios reached the conclusion that although people may have a right to freedom, slavery as an institution had a long enough tradition of civil acceptance to make it a legitimate precedent. He hastened to add, however, that only those natives living in denial of Christianity could be enslaved, and they had to be given their freedom if they were Christianized. Paz distinguished between Jews, Saracens, Turks and the New World natives, however: the Spanish had the right to make war in the New World and enslave the natives if they resisted, but once they had embraced Christianity, their freedom was to be restored (Traboulay 98). The difference was that historically, Turks and Jews had been hostile enemies of Christianity. The New World natives, however, did not attack Christians.

It was evident to King Ferdinand that there was serious need for reform. In 1513, the crown passed the Laws of Burgos, which attempted to protect the natives. Among other things, the Laws of Burgos forbade the Spanish from referring to the natives as “dogs,” limited the hours per day they could be forced to work and reinforced the pope’s requirement that the natives be given religious instruction10 (Pagden 1992 xxv.). Although the Laws of Burgos were a step in

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9 Unless otherwise indicated, all Spanish-English translations in this dissertation are mine.
10 The Laws of Burgos also established the requerimiento, a document that had to be read aloud to native communities before they were attacked. It informed the natives that they were now subjects to the Spanish crown, and that they would be Christianized. If they resisted, they would be attacked. The requerimiento was often criticized by reformers and missionaries like Las Casas as being pointless because
the right direction for native rights, they were weak and rarely enforced: by then, the colonial landholders and the encomienda system had established themselves and did not let anything interfere with their tactics of rule by exploitation.

King Ferdinand died shortly thereafter, setting off a bloodless but complicated process of succession, and it was years before anyone took up again the question of native rights under Spanish rule. The debate would return with a vengeance in the 1530’s, as we shall see in the next chapter.

The process of the invention of the natives had begun, as European powers far away decided exactly what the natives were. Columbus did not truly invent the New World natives in any legal sense: he assumed they were subjects of the Great Khan. Perhaps the first legal invention of the New World natives was done by Pope Alexander VI, when he interpellated them as Spanish subjects not long after Columbus’s first voyage. He would not be the last. As the early colonial period wound to a close along with the rule of Ferdinand and Isabella, the legal status of the native was still unclear. They could not be enslaved, at least in the traditional way. They had the right to become Christians, but they did not have the right to reject Christianity. They had the right to defend themselves from attacks if the attacker wanted to enslave them, but not if the attacker wanted to convert them. They had the right to rulers who did not prevent them from embracing Christianity, but not the right to rulers who defied the church.

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the natives in question did not speak Spanish, but the conquistadores recited it dutifully.
The question of the legal rights of the native had been put to rest for a while, but it was not to last. When the Spanish came into contact with the Mexica and the Inca empires, the conclusions reached by de Paz and Palacios Rubios would become further muddled, as we shall see in the next chapter. For now, let us proceed to the literature of the Age of Discovery.

Age of Discovery Literature

The most important writers of the early colonial period were not aware that they were writers at all. Those works that emerged from the time period as the most influential were mainly written by sailors and navigators, and their works were never necessarily meant to be published. For the most part, they wrote letters and missives to patrons in Europe, some of which did find their way into print.

This dissertation is about literature. More specifically, it is about how literature was used to create an invention of the New World natives during the colonial period. This was minimal during the earliest part of the colonial period and would grow over the next hundred years or so. Even though the sailor-writers of this period did not engage in as much invention as later writers did, it is nevertheless very important to examine their writing for the inventions they did create. They were the pioneers in the field, as it were.

Before we get to the literature they created, it is important to briefly consider the literature these sailors and explorers read. No one writes in a
vacuum: part of writing is imitation. The Europeans of the fifteenth century had a corpus of literature upon which they could draw to explain everything around them, including the definition of their own subject positions in relation to/contrast with their Others. When Columbus sailed in 1492 to find a new route to Asia, the history of the world was pretty clear in the minds of most of Europe. There was nothing on earth that had no explanation in scripture or in the works of the ancients, such as Aristotle, Plato, Seneca and Pliny (among others) who had labored centuries before.

Therefore, when the New World, in all its mind-boggling entirety, was found, the first place Europeans looked to for answers was the bible and the texts of the Greeks and Romans who were considered the ultimate authorities on ancient history. Of course, the Americas are not specifically mentioned in the bible or by any of the ancients, and information gleaned from these sources would prove to be sketchy at best. Only a few lines scattered throughout the body of ancient works seemed to indicate knowledge of the New World, and often those lines had to be taken out of context. This scrutiny of the ancients would yield several theories – such as the Carthage, Ophir, and Israel theories – but they had nothing in the way of any solid proof, such as descriptions of geography, flora, people, etc.

Columbus is an excellent example in which we can see the influence of the ancient authorities: he was very reliant on other, older texts. The journal of Columbus’ first voyage has been lost, but fortunately Bartolomé de Las Casas
copied and edited it, and this version has survived. Some of his letters have survived as well.

Columbus considered the ancients, but relied as heavily on works of other explorers, notably Marco Polo, who had visited Asia centuries before. He also had a copy of Pierre D’Ailly’s *Ymago Mundi*, a popular encyclopedia that had been written about a century before. Because he assumed he had found Asia, he stubbornly looked for familiar points of reference even when there were none to be found. He used the previous studies of the Orient as a starting point for his own observations, making things fit when he has to, as José Rabasa observes in his 1993 book *Inventing America*: “We must see now how images drawn from these previous descriptions of the Orient function as indices: Columbus’ imagination transmutes natural phenomena, linguistic expressions, and cultural traits observed in the New World into Oriental motifs well stocked in European registers of Eastern things.” (Rabasa 1993a 61)

These works, however, tricked Columbus into thinking he had found something he had not. The texts were informative, yet vague enough that Columbus could convince himself that he had found points of reference. Had not Marco Polo dismissed the peripheral cultures and peoples he met (he was more concerned with the court of the Grand Khan), and had he included a more detailed description of their lands and/or customs, Columbus might have realized that he was not in Asia. However, the works were fairly vague, forcing Columbus to fill in the gaps himself. Links and comparisons to the Orient abound in Columbus’

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11 see *The Diario of Christopher Columbus’ First Voyage to America, 1492-1493* or any of the several other editions of the same original text that have been published over the years.
journal: at one point during his first voyage, when told (somehow) by the natives of one island that they were at war, he assumed they were at war with the Great Khan of Marco Polo (Columbus 1989 65).

The result is a hodge-podge of observations mixed with older myths and beliefs about the Orient, coupled with a strong will to accomplish his mission, which was the establishment of a new trade route. At one point, after describing some marvelous islands he has just discovered, he informs the crown (through his journal): “I am still determined to go to the mainland and to the city of Quinsay and to give Your Highnesses’ letters to the Grand Khan and to ask for a reply and return with it.” (53). In his journal entry for November 12, after spending a month going from island to island in the Caribbean, he mentions the fruit and cotton on the islands, and says that it could be sold in the cities “belonging to the Grand Khan,” without the need to take it all back to Spain. (77).

By his third voyage, a weary Columbus seems to have given up on the ancients as a source of any knowledge regarding the things he has seen: “Ptolemy and the others who have written upon the globe, had no information respecting this part of the world, which was then unexplored…” (Columbus 2005 131). But even so, Columbus did not give up on traditional sources entirely: he believed he had found the Garden of Eden.

Not all of the explorers were as stubborn as Columbus in their refusal to see the New World for what it was. Fellow Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci, who led several expeditions to the New World around 1500 and whose letters to
his Italian supporters were widely read at the time, was less inclined than his contemporaries to search for answers in the ancients or in the bible: he was more of a realist, dealing with what he saw before him. For example, here he places value on empirical observation, not traditional beliefs:

> At length we sailed along the coast another 300 leagues, always encountering savage people, and innumerable times we fought with them, and captured some twenty of them, among whom were speakers of seven mutually incomprehensible languages: it is maintained that there are only seventy-seven languages in the world, but I say that there are more than one thousand, for those alone which I have heard number more than forty (Vespucci 14).

In the above citation, Vespucci is referring to the tradition contending that the fall of the tower of Babel brought about the creation of approximately seventy languages. He believes his ears, however, and in the process denies conventional wisdom. What he does not do, however, is assume that the natives are people whose language is known to other Europeans but not to him personally.

In fact, Vespucci was well known as an early proponent of the notion that the New World was, in fact, new, and any search for mention of it in the ancients was doomed to fail. Here, he expressed his opinions in a letter to Piero Soderini: “We...discovered much continental land and countless isles...which are
not spoken about by the ancient writers, I believe because they had no knowledge of them.” (59). Although it appeared obvious to Vespucci that the ancients had no previous knowledge of the New World, historians would still search these works for more than a century before it was almost universally accepted.

The writers of the early colonial period could not be certain what they were dealing with. Columbus remained stubbornly convinced that he had found Asia (and therefore, the history of the New World and the history of Asia was one and the same, and did not need to be investigated further) and Vespucci, although he did not believe the New World was Asia, nevertheless suspected that he had found paradise: “I must be near the Earthly Paradise: and well I might have believed I was near it amid such things. What is there to say of the quantity of birds, and their plumes and colors and songs, and how many kinds and how beautiful they are?” (Vespucci, 31)

The idea, therefore, that the history of the new discoveries needed to be learned and written down did not occur to them. Nevertheless, the native was invented through his origin and political history at this time, in a certain limited sense. The ‘noble savage’ stereotype would be applied to the native at this time, bringing with it a certain sort of political baggage. In this next section, I will explain how although Columbus and Vespucci differed on the nature of the New World itself, they were in agreement about the nature of its inhabitants, and together they began the invention of the New World native.
Origins and Political History in the Age of Discovery

On the day that Columbus sailed, there was no New World: Old World histories made no mention of it and Columbus was not looking for it. Thus, when the New World was discovered, its history was a “blank slate” of sorts. Europe soon became fascinated with the new discoveries and those who lived there. They wanted to know who they were, where they had come from, and how they had existed for so long in isolation from Europe, Africa and Asia.

In terms of the history of the New World, there were two parallel aspects of it that Europeans wanted to know: what was the origin of these people, and what was their history? They viewed the New World natives as a branch on the family tree of humanity that had somehow grown in darkness. Where had they branched off, and what had happened to them in the meanwhile? Imagine if we learned that on some far-away planet, humans from earth had been living for millennia. We, too, would wonder how they had gotten there and what they had done in the meantime, would we not?

In this section, I consider the history of the New World – in terms of origins and political history – as laid out by the writers of the time of discovery. The early colonial period is important because in terms of political history, the native would be forever saddled with the “noble savage” archetype during this period, and several of the important origin theories also originated during this time. The notions of political history and origins are linked yet separate: I will consider each in turn
Early political history invention in the New World

The earliest writers during this period did not create a great deal of political history for the natives, in part because some never doubted that Columbus had found Asia (a land which did have history, according to Europe), whereas others found little to suggest the potential for long-term political history in the tribes of the Caribbean, who lived simply and did not have any obvious great cultural achievements such as the temples and cities of the Aztecs and Inca. Most importantly, they did not have anything that the Europeans recognized as an effective memory device: in other words, they had no books.

Books, to the Spanish, were more than just something you could sit down and read: they were an almost mythic depository for wisdom and knowledge, the means by which History was preserved. The natives had their own memory devices, such as oral traditions, but these were not considered legitimate by the Spanish. If there was any ‘history’ to be found on the islands of the Caribbean, it was lost before Spanish historians and proto-ethnographers (such as the Catalan priest, Ramón Pané) were able to gather much of it. Pané mentions an oral tradition: “…just as the Moors, they have their laws gathered in ancient songs, by which they govern themselves…” (Pané 20). Pané wrote down some of the traditions of the Taíno, but many other Caribbean cultures vanished without a trace.
The natives of Hispaniola, Cuba, and the other islands first encountered by Columbus were, in any event, largely exterminated by slavery, warfare, and disease long before their political history – and therefore their rights to their lands – became an issue. By the time anyone got around to inventing them in any sort of social or historical sense, they were already gone.

The writers of this early period were mainly concerned with describing physical and other superficial aspects of the New World natives. Even this is an aspect of subjectivity: “The body cannot be thought of as a contained entity; it is in constant contact with others. This then provides the basis of considering subjectivity as a relational matter” (Probyn 290).

Columbus and Vespucci were explorers, not historians. Their descriptions, light on culture and traditions, often omitted speculation about origin or history altogether. Nevertheless, I have included these writers into this study because as the first to begin the history making process, their diaries and treatises helped establish precedents and set the tone for much of what was to come.

As the first to meet the inhabitants of the New World, the power of Columbus to define (or invent) them and their history was formidable. His descriptions of the native chieftains he met include references to an inherent nobility, even as the tribes and men in question displayed what to the Europeans must have seemed the most barbaric of customs. The people themselves are often described as innocent and harmless. Here, Columbus describes some as possible converts to Christianity:
They are very gentle and do not know what evil is; nor do they kill others, nor steal; and they are without weapons and so timid that a hundred of them flee from one of our men even if our men are teasing them. And they are credulous and aware that there is a God in heaven and convinced that we come from the heavens; and they say very quickly any prayer that we tell them to say, and they make the sign of the cross. (Columbus 1989 143)

We see less and less of this sort of characterization in his later letters, however, as bloody skirmishes and incidents such as the annihilation of the first colony 12 Columbus was forced to revise his opinions as to their character. By his second voyage, he has revised his opinion of their character: “…the Indians are not a people to be much afraid of; and, unless they should find us asleep, they would not dare to undertake any hostile movement against us…” (Columbus 2005 75) By the time of his third voyage, he considered them barbarous and compared the shoddy reception he got at the colony of Española with the treatment at the hands of the “cruel” natives (Columbus 2005 150). In spite of all of this, Columbus remained generally positive in regards to the natives, perhaps because he never gave up on the prospect of selling them as slaves.

Columbus’ popularity in Europe was exceeded by that of Amerigo Vespucci, a fellow Italian explorer who undertook several voyages to the New

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12 Columbus was forced to leave about thirty men behind on his first voyage after the Santa María, one of this three vessels, hit a reef and sank. Their small colony was destroyed before Columbus could return when the marooned Spanish seized native women (Burkholder and Johnson, 35).
World at the turn of the century. Vespucci’s descriptions of the natives are similar. When describing them, he fluctuates greatly between descriptions of barbarism and scenes of innocence. When at war, the natives were quite brutal: “And when they fight, they kill each other most cruelly, and the side that emerges victorious on the field buries all of their dead, but they dismember and eat their dead enemies; and those they capture they imprison and keep as slaves in their houses...” (Vespucci 33). Yet as violent as Vespucci finds the natives, he nevertheless also considers them quite innocent: “They do not engage in commerce, neither buying nor selling: in short, they live and content themselves with whatever nature gives them. The wealth to which we are accustomed in this Europe of ours and in other parts, such as gold, jewels, pearls, and other riches, are of no interest to them...they are liberal in giving and rarely deny you anything.” (65)

In general, Vespucci was not too hard on the natives. Even though he fought frequently with them, Vespucci tended to describe them in positive, exotic terms. Here, in a letter to Lorenzo de Pierfrancesco de Medici in 1502, he echoes Columbus’ assessment, implying, as Columbus did, a sort of natural, timeless political system.

They have no law or religious faith, they live as nature dictates, they do not know of the immortality of the soul. They have no private property among them, for they share everything. They have no borders of kingdoms or province; neither have they a king
or anyone they obey: each is his own master. They do not administer justice, which is not necessary for them, since greed does not prevail among them (Vespucci 30).

If the natives have no king, no justice, no need for private property and no greed, then they would certainly have no history recognizable to Europeans, whose history was littered with kings, wars and greed. This timeless quality is in itself a form of political history, and, as such, an invention: the people had never had kings, conflicts or great battles. They were simple island folk and had always been so. In this case, having no history was the same as having a history of sorts: the result was that the natives were interpellated by the Europeans as people in need of leadership.

The resulting invention of the New World natives by Columbus and Vespucci is that of the noble/savage. A ‘noble savage’ is a constructed archetype in which a seemingly barbarous ‘other’ – in this case, the natives of the Caribbean that Columbus and Vespucci encountered – are believed to have a certain set of characteristics which include savage customs and little in the way of social refinement, yet nevertheless is possessed of a certain nobility of spirit. It is as if the ‘other,’ being removed from society, does not have society’s baggage, for good or ill. Society may make us more polite, but it also tends to corrupt. The noble savage archetype was applied wholesale to native populations that were not very well understood by the explorers that encountered them. The “noble savage” stereotype carries with it a sort of historical baggage as well: although Columbus
never specifically addressed the question of the political history of the Americans, their state (as he described it) implies a certain timeless quality. The reader is left to assume that the Americans had always had the same “natural” political system.

The invention of the New World natives as noble savages damaged them on many levels. The impression of them as gullible rubes, willing and needing to accept Christianity was one that would persist: “In a long-term memory, the picturesqueness of the tableau bespeaks a travesty of indigenous peoples that long outlives Columbus’ description of a proud but festive native lord incarnating the virtues of Christianity or civilization, we find a new version – the savages’ willingness to adopt European customs and costumes, and thereby submit their bodies to inscriptions of power.” (Rabasa 1993a 74-75) In other words, their invention as noble savages by the earliest visitors to the New World set up the New World natives as potential converts subjects and slaves, who wanted and needed foreign rule in order to become civilized.

Since they had no king and no justice (and no Christianity) it was necessary to give them those things, even if it meant enslaving them. This ‘noble savage’ stereotype would eventually evolve into the notion that the New World natives were incapable of self-rule, perhaps because they had never achieved true self rule as far as the Europeans were concerned. We will return to the subject of native capacity for self-rule later in this dissertation.

Queen Isabella was convinced by this invention of the natives as potential subjects lacking civilization: “…while Isabel viewed the Indians as royal vassals rather than as rightful slaves of the resident Europeans, she did think that
“they have neither law nor sect,” as instructions for Columbus’ second voyage stated.” (Liss 342) Had Isabel seen the New World natives as civilized, the colonial period may have taken a different path. But she did not, and therefore she “approved” the noble/savage invention of the early colonial period.

Columbus and Vespucci could not have known it, but they had taken the first step in what would become a centuries-long project of inventing the New World native in a negative, backward way. This project had the purpose of validating the colonial enterprise, as Hardt and Negri point out:

The other was imported to Europe...and thus made increasingly available for the popular imaginary. In both its scholarly and its popular forms, nineteenth-century anthropology presented non-European subjects and cultures as undeveloped versions of Europeans and their civilization: they were signs of primitiveness that represented stages on the road to European civilization. The diachronic stages of humanity’s evolution toward civilization were thus conceived as present synchronically in the various primitive peoples and cultures spread across the globe. The anthropological presentation of non-European others within this evolutionary theory of civilizations seemed to confirm and validate the eminent position of Europeans and thereby legitimate the colonialist project as a whole. (Hardt and Negri 126)
Hardt and Negri here make the case that Europeans cast the American other as early versions of themselves. As Homi Bhabha reminds us: “It is always in relation to the place of the Other that colonial desire is articulated”. (Bhabha 44) My only issue with Hardt and Negri is that they identify nineteenth-century anthropology as the starting point for this sort of discourse. While it is unarguable that by the nineteenth century the concept of the American other as distant in terms of civilization had been perfected – and theories such as evolution (when interpreted socially) and the burgeoning field of anthropology helped refine this sort of theory, I would contest that the process had begun long before, in this case with Columbus himself. And was Columbus not a proto-anthropologist when he described (however briefly or inaccurately) the cultures he encountered? “Columbus was not only intrigued by the culture of Indians but was also the patron of the first ambitions effort to study it. On his second voyage in 1493 he brought along a Hieronymite friar named Ramón Pané…about whom little is known except that he went to live among the Taínos – the natives of Hispaniola – for two years.” (Sanders 124)

As these early visitors to the New World made assumptions about the past and present political systems of the New World natives, they created the norm that other historians would later be forced to either follow or contradict; it was during this period that the foundation of all New World history and ethnography would be built. After Columbus and Vespucci, all native political and social systems would be suspect and considered inferior unless proven
otherwise. Even the more advanced Mexica and Inca would never shed the noble/savage imagery associated with the New World since the beginning.

The noble savage archetype caught on quickly in literature: Thomas More’s influential *Utopia* is set on an island in the New World: he was influenced by the writings of Vespucci. In the work, he describes natives that have constructed an ideal society, without the burdens of European problems. Fragments of Vespucci’s letters inspired the Englishman. Consider this excerpt from a letter to Piero Soderini: “The wealth to which we are accustomed in this Europe of ours and in other parts, such as gold, jewels, pearls and other riches, are of no interest to them…they neither labor to procure them, nor prize them.” (Vespucci 65) More was fascinated by the New World and set his tale of a perfect government there: “Vespucci’s description of our Noble Savage is transformed by More into the first principle of the philosophy that he presents, whose ramifications in time go as far as the Romantics of the nineteenth century and even farther. America becomes for all time the continent that dissatisfied Europeans will turn to in every age.” (Arciniegas 60).

The noble savage archetype as applied to New World natives would persist well into the twentieth century, particularly in the world of literature: consider the 1919 novel *Raza de Bronce* by Alcides Arguedas, in which the hero and heroine are recognizable noble savage stereotypes (to name just one of many). The model became so pervasive that one of the goals of the later indigenist movement was to counteract it.
As the early colonial period gave way into the mid-century, a great deal changed. With undeniable proof that the Americas was not Asia and the discovery of the mighty Aztec and Inca Empires, there came into an existence a rising need on the part of Europe to know the history of the New World, and several writers appeared who addressed this need for histories. These mid-16th-century histories were much more detailed than anything written by Columbus or Vespucci, as we shall see, and we will also see how the field of history became a fertile ground in which later writers would plant the seed of invention.

Old World origins in the early colonial period

Adam, Eve and Noah. European Christians believed that the lineage of the human race began with Adam and Eve and continued through Noah. All of the souls that had ever lived could trace their parentage back to them. The Garden of Eden was an unknown place – although both Columbus and Vespucci suspected that they had discovered it – but it was widely believed that Noah’s Ark had come to rest on Mount Ararat, in the Middle East. From there, it’s easy to get to Asia, Europe and Africa. But it’s not easy to reach the Americas. So how, then, did humanity reach the New World?

Apart from social/political history, the other historical means by which the old world invented the new was through the question of origins. In the period of 1492-1521, the question of origins was rarely considered by writers. The influential Columbus, for example, never considered the possibility of European
or African origins for the New World natives, because he believed he had found Asia. It wasn’t until 1521 and the return of the Magellan expedition that it was conclusively proved that Columbus was wrong and America was not, in fact, attached to Asia. But the roots of the origin debate can still be found in this time period, because many writers, such as Ramón Pané and Pedro Mártir de Angleria, compared the New World natives to Old World cultures when they first encountered them. Dark-skinned natives were ‘like Moors’ or idolatrous shamans were ‘like Jews.’ Comparisons such as these facilitated later origin suppositions.

Columbus was responsible for beginning the speculation that the Indies were, in fact, the biblical land of Ophir. This theory would take root: later on, in 1607, Gregorio García would dedicate an entire chapter of his book to it. But Columbus compared the New World to Ophir not in an effort to explain certain New World customs he had seen. Rather, it was to support his case with the Spanish monarchy and to advance his own millenarist beliefs:

Columbus’s ten-year insistence that Hispaniola was really Ophir, or Uphaz, or Cipango – all places which were known to be rich in gold or other rarities – were on one level good public relations; after all, the sovereigns who were financing Columbus’ journeys, Ferdinand and Isabella, had to be convinced that their efforts were worthwhile even though very little precious cargo had in fact returned to their shores. But it would be wrong to see Columbus as a mere self-promoter in his use of biblical names for his own
discoveries. He was, after all, a man of deep piety and Christian faith who earnestly desired the universal triumph of the Catholic Church under the leadership of the Spanish monarchs. (Romm 30-31)

Therefore, although Columbus was the first to suggest Ophir as the origin of the New World natives, it was more about him and his beliefs than about the natives. Later historians would look at Ophir from different angles.

Amerigo Vespucci did not see any connections between the people he met and any old world peoples. From a 1501 letter to Piero Soderini: “…we do not encounter among these peoples any who had a religion, nor can they be called Moors or Jews, and are worse than heathens, because we never saw them perform a sacrifice, nor did they have any house of prayer.” (64) It is interesting to note that although Vespucci denied any comparisons between New World natives and Jews and Moors, he nevertheless mentions them: they are the ‘other’ that first leapt to mind in 1501. In any event, he finds the New World natives worse: they lack any religion at all.13

Although Columbus and Vespucci were the most famous and widely-read of the early “inventors” of America, there were others. Much of the information that comes to us from this early period is, in fact, more valuable than later data because it is relatively untainted by comparisons between New World...

13 Interestingly enough, Vespucci made a good guess about the origins of the New World natives. Here he describes their appearance: “They are not very fair of countenance, for they have broad faces somehow reminiscent of the Tartars…” (Vespucci 61) Today, it is widely accepted that the people of the Americas are Eastern Asian in origin.
cultures and European ones. For example, the Catalan priest Ramón Pané wrote about his days with the Taíno natives of Hispaniola while he waited for Columbus to return between his first and second voyages. He wrote detailed descriptions of what he heard from the elders and tribal chieftains, and described certain customs. For example, here he describes some of the beliefs of the natives regarding the sun and the moon:

And they also say that the sun and moon emerged from a cave located in the country of a cacique named Mautiatihuel; this cave is called Iguanaboina, and they hold it in great esteem, and they have it painted in their fashion, without any figures, with a lot of foliage and other such things. And in this cave there were two zemis made from stone, the size of half a man’s arm, with their hands tied, and they seemed to be sweating. (Pané 17)

The description is straightforward and non-judgmental. Note also the lack of any comparison to other cultures: the word “Iguanaboina” for example is not linguistically compared to old Hebrew or Carthaginian, it is merely reproduced. Later cultural discussions would have much more such comparisons. Pané limits himself to saying that in their style of their religious chants they are “like Moors.” (20)

Pané was no great fan of the natives: he especially criticizes the medicine men or bohutis, claiming that they cause the people to believe in “frauds” such as
their abilities to speak with the dead or special curing powers. But he did not
bother ‘inventing’ the natives by comparing them with anything he knew from
Europe: he had no stake in doing so. Thus his “ethnography” is less suspect than
that of other, later writers, on the grounds that it was free of self-interest.

Although it would not formally be proposed until later, the first theories
that the Indians were somehow descended from Jews date from the Age of
Discovery. Serge Gruzinski has found examples of common soldiers speculating
about a possible Jewish origin as early as 1518 (Gruzinski 1994 34) and Bernal
Diaz del Castillo mentions discussing the theory with his companions before the
conquest off the Aztecs (Diaz del Castillo 26). The clear theory that the natives
were descended from the ten lost tribes of Israel would come later.

Columbus, Vespucci and Pané were not the only explorers and writers to
come into contact and express their beliefs about the New World natives during
this early time period. I believe, however, that they are fairly representative of the
first tentative efforts to establish a history for the New World. It is noteworthy
that some tentative steps were taken in this period that would be elaborated upon
later: one example is Pané’s assertion that the Indians were similar to Moors.
Later historians would wonder if the Americans actually were descended from
Moors.

When the Magellan expedition returned from its round-the-world
expedition in 1521, it was proven conclusively that the Americas were not part of
Asia. No longer could European intellectuals pretend that Columbus had done
what he claimed. If the Americas were not Asia, then the Americans were not
Asians. Suddenly, they were a people without a history, but it would not be long before many stepped up to create one for them. It would not be until 1535, however, that serious consideration began to be given to the possible Old World origins of the New World natives.

Chapter One Conclusion:

As the Age of Discovery wound down to be replaced by the time of conquest and reform, the interpellation of the native subject in European discourse and the subsequent delineation of the “subject position” of the American native was well under way. In the space of less than thirty years, the inhabitants of two continents had a new identity created for them by Europe. In a legal sense, they were now subjects of the Kingdoms of Spain and Portugal who had the right to enslave them if they rejected Christianity. In a spiritual sense, they were either innocents or heathens and idolaters, depending on who you asked: in either case, they were men and women who needed to be educated in the ways of the Catholic Church. According to the European discourse, this was for their own good, and what’s more, it was the will of God: God himself had selected Columbus to deliver the New World into the hands of Spain. In a political sense, the New World natives had no real rulers, so it was incumbent upon Spain to provide rulers for them. As for the twin notions of political history and origins – which we will see in much more detail in coming chapters – the question was still unclear. The ancients provided some possibilities: Ophir, Carthage, Jews – but it wasn’t until
the return of the Magellan expedition in 1521 that serious speculation about origin began.

In 1521, the age of conquest and reform began. In this next chapter, we shall see how the process of invention continued. Explorer-writers such as Columbus and Vespucci were replaced with devout reformers such as Bartolomé de Las Casas, violent conquistadores such as Hernán Cortés and Francisco Pizarro, and writer/historians such as Pedro Cieza de León and Agustín de Zarate. Every one of them would add to or modify the invention of the New World native in his own way.
CHAPTER 2: THE AGE OF CONQUEST AND REFORM, 1521-1556

From the very beginning, Spanish policy towards the New World has been characterized by blindness of the most pernicious kind: even while the various ordinances and decrees governing the treatment of the native peoples have continued to maintain that conversion and the saving of souls has first priority, this is belied by what has actually been happening on the ground.” (Bartolomé de Las Casas, A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies, 32).

1492 is more famous, but 1521 was every bit as momentous in terms of Spanish history. It was the year that the spread of Protestantism in northern Europe began to be perceived as a substantial threat by the Catholic world. This year also marked the ascension of Charles I of Spain into Charles V, emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. In the New World, the Cortés expedition was sending back the first reports of mighty empires and vast wealth in Central Mexico. The Magellan expedition was in the middle of its round-the-world expedition (it returned in 1522 after three years, although Magellan himself died on the way).
Each of these historical facts had a great impact on Spain. As the strongest and wealthiest of the Catholic nations, Spain found itself on the front lines of the battle against Protestantism. Charles V found himself ruler of a divided empire: devout Catholic Spain in the south, and increasingly protestant Netherlands in the north.

Reports of wealth from the New World fueled the Spanish collective imagination. Adventurers and would-be conquerors flocked to the Indies, lured by visions of gold, silver and status. Some came to convert and educate the natives, but most came for the gold. Although by 1522, there were very few who still believed that the New World was, in fact, Asia, the return of the Magellan expedition conclusively proved that it was something altogether new.

If 1492 marks the date when the New World was revealed, then 1521 marks the date when the discursive “invention” of the New World began. The period of 1521 to 1556 (this date refers to the abdication of Charles V in favor of his son, Phillip II) is what I refer to as the Age of Conquest and Reform. It was during this period that the vast Inca and Aztec empires were defeated by Spanish forces, not to mention any number of smaller, weaker New World kingdoms, such as the remnants of the Maya. The horrors of the conquest are too lengthy to list here; suffice it to say that had Amnesty International existed in 1530, their list of human rights abuses in the New World would have been very long indeed. The Spanish conquistadores resorted to very cruel techniques, including torture and massacres, to conquer, subdue and control native populations, but there is no
arguing that they were effective. By the time Phillip II took over in 1556, 

*conquistadores* such as Cortés, Almagro and Pizarro had presented him with two continents worth of new subjects and a great amount of wealth.

The horrors of the conquest were far too brutal to go ignored. There were those who remembered that the original papal decrees of 1493 did not specify allowing torture, rape, pillage and murder, but rather charged Spain with the duty of the Christianization of the New World. As more and more tales of horror reached Spain, an increasing number of legal experts, theologians and members of the court began to get concerned that Spain was not doing the right thing in the Indies. These men, most of whom were members of the clergy, began questioning the acts of the conquistadores and fighting for more native rights. This battle, which started in 1511 with an impassioned sermon on the island of Hispaniola by Antonio de Montesinos, became one of the greatest internal Spanish conflicts and debates of the sixteenth century. The winner would gain the power to define the nature and status of the American natives.

In essence, it was a battle over the construction of New World native subjectivity: a battle over who would define the identity of Spain’s newest citizens. To the conquistadores and colonists, the New World natives were not subjects, they were their property. At best, they were a labor force, without which the colony would not function, and therefore would not produce revenue for the crown. At worst, they were brutes, natural slaves who *deserved* slavery because it was their natural state but also because God wished to punish them for their
idolatry, sodomy, fornication, cannibalism, sacrifices and other sins attributed to them by the Spanish.

To the reformers, the New World natives were not natural slaves, they were free men who had the same rights under natural and civil laws that the Spanish did. At the very minimum, they had certain property and personal freedom rights that were being regularly denied them by the Spanish. The most radical of the reformers went so far as to demand that the Spanish return all of their New World possessions to the original owners – the native nobility – and leave. Others declared that the Spanish had never had any moral, legal, or religious cause to wage war upon the natives, but that the natives did, in fact, have such a right if they were to make war upon the Spanish.

Not everyone in Spain and the New World was either an apologist for the conquest or a reformer: many felt there was some middle ground. Many believed, for example, that it was acceptable to wage war upon native populations that did not allow the Spanish to teach them Christianity. Others felt that it was necessary to enslave the natives in order to ‘civilize’ them.

So, what were the New World natives? Were they unthinking brutes, less than human, natural slaves whose sins had led God to deliver them into the hands of the Spanish? Or were they free men whose only crime had been to somehow lose the messages of Christianity, and once they were taught the true faith, they were to be free?

The answer is not simply an academic question. If the powers that were – in this case, the Spanish crown, the Council of Indies and the Catholic Church –
decided that the natives were brutes and natural slaves, then the massacres, torture, enslavement and murder could continue unabated. If they decided that they were free men, then the entire Spanish colonization effort would have to come to a grinding stop. The colonial enterprise would have to start over with a different labor system. Compromise was difficult between these two groups and their drastically different views, as any compromise would probably not please either the colonists or the reformers or both.

In this period, Spanish intellectuals would discard the simplistic “noble savage” model of native subjectivity bequeathed to them by the explorers and sailors of the Age of Discovery and replace it with more complicated models that fit with existing Spanish hegemonic discourse. Randolf Persuad reminds us that this has ever been the task of the lettered class: “… each social class produces its own intellectuals who concomitantly construct an appropriate world view of that class. The task of organic intellectuals is to socialize the view of their own class so as to make this view the dominant and prevailing one” (Persuad 37).

Much of the discourse produced during this period was binary and oppositional in nature. This is a common feature of colonial constructive discourse: “We are relationally positioned as inhabiting different universes. In fact we could be seen as standing in binary opposition to each other: me white, she black; me affluent, she poor; me educated, she probably not; me the invader of her country, she the dispossessed” (Probyn 297). The Other is constructed in relation to the Self and in a hegemonic/subaltern relationship, the hegemony tends
to see and emphasize differences between the self/other and not similarities, which could undermine the colonial social structure.

This period was crucial to the process of the invention of the New World native. In the halls of power in Spain, they were busily constructing the native subject, and their conclusions would affect the entire New World for generations. The natives themselves had no input in the process whatsoever: they had no voice.

In this chapter, I will pick up where the last chapter left off in regards to the invention of the New World native. I begin the chapter with a short, succinct description of the Spain of Charles V. His reign was very important in terms of the invention of the natives, because at first he permitted the conquests of the 1520’s and 1530’s, before becoming convinced of the need for reform later in his rule. Spanish needs in the New World – chiefly labor – helped shape the direction that colonial writers took when they began to “define” the nature of the native.

The second part of the chapter deals with the reform movement. Passionate men such as Bartolomé de Las Casas and Francisco de Vitoria argued the case for civil, moral and legal equality for Spain’s new subjects. They had different tactics: Las Casas attempted to counter the image of the natives as bloodthirsty barbarians by re-inventing them as peaceful lambs of God. Vitoria, on the other hand, was a legal expert who proved quite conclusively that Spain had conquered the New World without a shred of legal right to do so. Together, these reformers and their disciples brought about some changes and some improvements in the situation in the New World. Also in this section, I will
briefly consider, as an example, the famous debate over the interpellation of native identity between Las Casas and Juán Ginés de Sepúlveda that took place in Valladolid in 1551.

The final section of this chapter deals with literature, because it was in the written word that the native subject was defined and constructed. The character of the New World natives was invented on many levels, but this dissertation is primarily about written history and discourse. In the age of conquest and reform, the first written histories of the New World natives began to appear. Writers such as Agustín de Zárate and Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo wrote hugely popular texts about the history and conquest of the mighty New World cultures. They included details of history and origins. At the time, history as a discipline was linked to Christian thought, but nevertheless these works were fairly straightforward and non-judgmental of the natives, and did not question the political legitimacy of those who had ruled before the arrival of the Spanish. This would all change during the reign of Phillip II, as we shall see in Chapter Three.

The age of conquest and reform was a time of conflict in the New World: between _conquistadores_ and natives, and between colonists and reformers. It was in the fiery forge of this conflict that the native subject would be evaluated, created and formalized by the Spanish hegemony.
King Ferdinand died in 1516, having already been predeceased by Isabella in 1504. His death produced a relatively non-violent but nevertheless complicated struggle of succession. Their daughter, Juana, was a logical choice, but she was considered incompetent to rule (Juana's brother Juan had died in 1497). By 1519, the dust had settled, and Spain had a new king: Juana’s son Charles I, who would later become Charles V when he was crowned holy Roman Emperor in 1520. His realm included all of Spain and the New World, the Netherlands, and large parts of Germany and Austria. He inherited his kingdoms in northern Europe through his father, who died when Charles was young.

Charles V was a hardworking but very busy king, and Spain was no better than a mid-level priority for him. Due to the sheer weight of his responsibilities, Carlos V was forced to organize his Empire. He created several councils and committees, and would meet with them on a regular basis. He spent much of his time traveling, and he was not in Spain at all from 1543 to 1556, when he abdicated the throne in favor of Philip II. The people of Spain resented his absence at first: “the Spanish reaction, peninsular and localized, was a series of revolts centered in some of the urban districts and hence called the comunero revolts (1517-1522). When these had been subdued, Charles was wise enough to adjust himself to Spanish sensitivities.” (Poole 5)

Charles was king for many years, and he ruled a vast empire. For the purposes of this study, he is important as the ruler who organized the New World
in the way that he saw fit, and as the sponsor of the New Laws of 1542. He is also important in that he was the ruler during the time of conquests, notably those of Cortés in Mexico and Pizarro in Peru.

In 1524, Carlos V established the Royal and Supreme Council of the Indies: it was the Council’s duty to oversee and make recommendations on all of his holdings in the New World (Poole 4). After this council was established, Carlos tended to be more re-active than pro-active in the New World, preferring to let the Council deal with New World affairs. Charles exported many existing Spanish administrative structures to the New World. Regional administration was based on the Aragonese model, in which an overall supervisor, such as a Viceroy, oversaw the administration of large territories. On the local level, the Castilian model (of courts, local administrators, tax collectors, etc.) was used (Burkholder and Johnson 81). Charles divided the New World into two viceroyalties: New Spain and Peru. The viceroys themselves tended to follow the model of the first viceroy of New Spain, Antonio de Mendoza, a proven administrator from noble stock.

Even with decent viceroys and a proven administrative system, ruling the New World was very difficult. A round-trip message from the king or the Council of Indies to a viceroy might take up to 15 months (Burkholder and Johnson 80).

The reign of Charles V was marked by incredible feats of conquest in the New World. The vast Aztec and Inca empires were defeated and brought under the control of Spain. This brought a great amount of gold into the royal coffers,
as the Spanish crown reserved the right to keep one-fifth of all gold gained from conquest. It also brought with it many reports of torture, rapine, mayhem and massacre.

By the early 1540’s, reformers led by Bartolomé de Las Casas and Francisco de Vitoria had convinced Charles that reform was needed in the New World. The encomienda system had resulted in a native depopulation of staggering scope, and those colonists who did not have an encomienda also reported abuses. Charles agreed, and the New Laws of 1542 were adopted.

The New Laws of 1542 broadened the power of viceroys and other colonial officials, but they also prohibited slavery and attacked the encomienda system, which was already firmly entrenched in the New World: “In the 1540s, the encomienda provided the economic base for the social and political power of the conquistadors and first settlers. Men who had survived the Indian wars and civil conflicts of Peru’s early years would not voluntarily surrender their hard-won financial welfare and place at the apex of the social order” (Burkholder and Johnson 57). Charles knew that he could not abolish the encomienda without serious repercussions, and the New Laws were an attempt to gradually phase the system out. Creation of new encomiendas was suspended, and those who had been responsible for the atrocious civil wars in Peru in the 1530’s were stripped of their encomiendas. In addition, existing encomiendas were to revert to the crown upon the death of the current holder.

To say that the New Laws were received poorly in the colonies is an understatement. The viceroy of Peru who tried to enforce them, Blasco Núñez
Vela, was killed, and the viceroy of Mexico refused to implement them, fearing a similar fate. The laws proved impossible for the crown to enforce: “...the New Laws failed catastrophically. They led to civil war in Peru, and to the north, in New Granada and New Spain, they were politely but firmly ignored. The crown backtracked, finally accepting that there was no way to abolish permanent trusteeships of Indian labor.” (Seed 2001 68) The crown relented, allowing the encomiendas to pass through more generations. The encomienda system would be a thorn in the side of the Spanish crown for the next few decades.

The time of Charles V is mostly important to this study because it was the age of the reformers. It was during his rule that Spain – and the world – was made aware of the horrors taking place in the New World. In the Americas, Bartolomé de Las Casas led the struggle for a new invention of the natives, one that showed them as peaceful lambs of God in need of spiritual guidance, not slavery. In Spain, Francisco de Vitoria and his disciples addressed the question of the legal rights of the natives, and found that the Spanish were depriving the American natives of their rights under established civil and religious laws and precedents. In this next section, I will examine the reform movement that peaked during this period.

The reformers

By the time of Charles V, the subject construction of the New World natives was well under way. Many organizations, from Spain to Rome, had
defined the New World subject in ways designed to further their own ends. First, the natives had been invented as Spanish subjects by Pope Alexander VI. Successive waves of conquistadores and explorers had interpellated them as adversaries, slaves, and property. De Paz and Rubios, the Spanish legal experts consulted by Ferdinand in 1512-1513, had confirmed these inventions with some restrictions. The church had defined them as potential Christians and converts who had the right to Christianity, but not the right to refuse it.

Starting with Antonio Montesinos, the Dominican friar who gave the scathing sermon on Hispaniola in 1511 in which he questioned Spanish rights in the New World, a series of men began questioning the hegemonic discursive subjugation of the native: they felt that the peoples of the New World had certain rights under universal religious and civil law that were being denied them.

Although this movement began in 1511 with Montesinos, it was not a true force in Spanish politics and public opinion until well into the reign of Charles V. The greatest of the reformers was the Dominican Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, the tireless “Defender of the Indies” and author of countless books and treatises. Las Casas was not alone, however: many learned minds in the New World and the old echoed his questions and shared his passion, if not his charisma. In this next section, I will consider the reformers and their movement.

Bartolomé de Las Casas (1484-1576)
New Spain was discovered in 1517 and, at the time, great atrocities were committed against the indigenous people of the region and some were killed by members of the expedition. In 1518 the so-called Christians set about stealing from the people and murdering them on the pretense of settling the area. And from that year until this – and it is now 1542 – the great iniquities and injustices, the outrageous acts of violence and the bloody tyranny of these Christians have steadily escalated, the perpetrators having lost all fear of God, all love of their sovereign, and all sense of self-respect. (Bartolomé de Las Casas: *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*, 42.)

A young Bartolomé de Las Casas sailed with Columbus, and was among the first to arrive in the New World. He was granted an estate, and held slaves of his own. By 1510 he had entered the priesthood, and in 1511 he was one of the settlers on Hispaniola who heard the impassioned sermon of the Dominican Antonio Montesinos, who questioned the right of Spain to attack and enslave people who had caused them no offense.

Over time, Las Casas began to seriously ponder that very question. Eventually he concluded that the Spanish did not have that right, and that the natives of the New World were being exploited against God’s Will. He dedicated his life to defending the natives, and in the process, saving the souls of the Spanish. He wrote volumes of books and treatises during his long life, but the
message was the same in each of them: God gave the Indies to the Spanish as a test: and the Spanish are failing. He was aware of the social, legal and spiritual invention of the natives that had already been foisted upon them: he attempted to replace it with a new, counter-invention that showed that the natives were not slaves, but rational men who needed to accept Christianity for themselves. He entered into a discourse with those who had been busily inventing the natives as slaves and sub-humans.

Las Casas truly believed that the New World natives were free people, capable of rational thought and an acceptance of Christianity without coercion. The main difference between Las Casas and the Salamanca school (which we will consider shortly) is that those associated with the Salamanca school took issue with the legal definitions of the natives, whereas Las Casas was more concerned with the construction of their social subjectivity and their assigned place in Spanish society. Las Casas worked hard in Spain and in the New World to enact reforms and better the lot of the Indians, whereas the others were more interested in fine points of classical law and academic debate. It is too simplistic to say that Las Casas was more practical and the others were more theoretical, but if you must compare the different reformers in one sentence, it will suffice.

As we saw in the previous chapter, the expulsion of the Jews, the defeat of the Moors, and the discovery of the New World led to a widespread optimism in Spain of a spiritual nature: many believed that God had chosen a divine destiny for Spain. Queen Isabel and Christopher Columbus were only two of the many who believed in Spain’s place in God’s plan. This belief is known as
millenarism and it, too, was a tool of invention: If God has a plan for all men, then what is His plan for the New World natives? Many believed that it was their destiny to be slaves. Millenarism is real-time allegoresis: the Spanish felt they were all players on a divine stage.

Las Casas put a spin on the belief that God had sent the Spanish to the New World: he agreed that God had, indeed, sent them, but not as a reward for being the most fervent of his believers. According to Las Casas, the New World was a test of sorts: God had given the New World to Spain not for plunder, but to peacefully bring the souls of the Americas to Christianity. Unlike his contemporaries, he felt they were botching the job that God had given them. Las Casas believed that Pope Alexander VI had made this clear when he granted the New World to Spain in 1493 (Pagden 1992 xvi). Las Casas wanted more than anything for his countrymen to see the error of their ways (as he had) before it was too late. His countrymen had chosen the wrong path in the New World – but never did he doubt that the correct path existed and that he could put them back on it. Las Casas is rightly remembered as the “defender of the Indies” but in fact, he worked just as hard to save the souls of the Spanish.

Another spin that Las Casas put on the belief that God had sent the Spanish to the New World had to do with the nature of the Americans themselves. He argued that the Indians naturally were the way that God created them: “God made all the peoples of this area, many and varied as they are, as open and innocent as can be imagined.” (Las Casas 1992 9) The logic is not hard to follow from there: if the Americans were made by God, then so were their defects
(although Las Casas is not prepared to admit to these defects as defined by others), and anyone who has a problem with it can take it up with God. Las Casas, therefore, claims to see more deeply into God’s plan: perhaps, he implies, the Spanish were brought to the New World to expose them to the natural innocence of the Americans. Perhaps God was trying to save the Spanish, not the natives.

Las Casas is perhaps best remembered for his famous debate in 1551 with Spanish scholar and writer Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda. Sepúlveda had been encouraged by the President of the Council of Indies to produce a treatise, one that would clarify the justifications and rationale for the conquest once and for all. Las Casas brought all of his influence to bear in order to block the publication of this work. We will return to Sepúlveda and this famous debate later.

Las Casas died at the age of 92 in 1576. He fought for native rights and liberties right up until the very end. In fact, during his final years, he was more outspoken than ever. By the 1560’s, by then in his 70's, he was calling for a complete overhaul of New World policy and claiming that the Spanish had usurped the rule of the Americas. He even claimed that the Indians had the right to wage a just war upon the Spanish.

Of Las Casas’ many books and treatises, one stands out as particularly worthy of consideration. In the late 1530’s, Las Casas was working on a lengthy history of the New World which would eventually get the appropriate title *Historia de las Indias*. The work focused on the conquest and occupation of the New World and the consequences for the native populations.
When the need for reform became great, Las Casas condensed his massive and still unfinished work into a much more portable and readable summary of sorts, which he titled *Brevíssima Relación de la Destrucción de las Indias*, or *A Short Account of the Destruction of the Indies*. He had completed it by 1542, when he was about 58. The book took the form of a *relación*, which was a sort of official letter from a colonial official to the king bearing personal eyewitness testimony. By using this format, Las Casas appropriated an existing discursive norm which was considered honest and trustworthy.

The *Short Account* was intended for the young crown prince of Spain, the man who would eventually become known as Phillip II, although Las Casas was certainly aware that his *relación* could eventually be published and find a larger audience.

The *Short Account* is an extended rant against the Spanish conquistadores, officials, and even clergy who were abusing the natives in the New World. The work was a demand for action on the part of the Spanish crown to act to save their new subjects. In the work, he compared the Spanish to Moors and the natives to peaceful lambs. He singled out certain conquistadores, such as Pedrarias Dávila and Pedro de Alvarado, for special scorn. He describes tortures, massacres and other unspeakable abuses in vivid detail.

In the *Short Account*, Las Casas kept the binary nature common to hegemonic/subaltern discourse, but inverted the values. Other Spanish writers had defined native subjectivity with discourse that featured colonizer Self/colonized Other in opposition and defined said opposition with such
polarities as civilized/savage, educated/ignorant, Christian/pagan, enlightened/misled and gallant/cowardly. Las Casas shrewdly kept the structure of this discourse – so recognizable to the Spanish masses at the time – but changed the adjectives. The natives were peaceful, the Spanish violent. The natives were innocent, the Spanish corrupt. The natives were beloved of God, the Spanish in danger of mortal sin. Perhaps because of his use of a familiar discursive paradigm that allowed the Spanish to see their own ugly actions through the eyes of the natives – and even possibly through the eyes of God – the book had a tremendous impact in Spain and Europe.

In the Short Account, Las Casas took on the hegemonic European discourse, creating a counter-invention of the New World natives, one that showed them as peaceful and virtuous. Here he describes Guarionex, one of the native kings of Hispaniola who dealt with Columbus: “The king himself was dutiful and virtuous, a man of placid temperament much devoted to the king and queen of Spain.” (Las Casas 1992 19)

He then proceeds to describe Guarionex’s reward: his wife was raped by one of Columbus captains, and then he was later hunted down, his retainers were slain, and he was shipped to Spain in chains. He never made it, however: the ship was lost at sea.

Las Casas makes frequent use of the contrast of native virtue and Spanish wickedness: the case of Guarionex was only one example. The overall invention that emerges is that of peaceful men who need spiritual guidance, not slavery, to
accept Christianity, which supposedly was the Spaniards’ prime purpose in the New World.

The *Short Account* opened the eyes of many in Spain to the reality of the New World and the encomienda system and found a wide audience abroad, as well. The English and the Dutch translated and reprinted it, and the document was used for Protestant propaganda. The notion that Spain was too morally corrupt to govern its New World colonies became known as the “Leyenda Negra,” or the “Black Legend,” and it did serious harm to international Spanish credibility. The fallout from the *Short Account* was so great that Las Casas’ *History of the Indies* (the longer work that it condensed) was not published until the nineteenth century.

Las Casas’ use of contrasting characterizations of the Spanish and native was very powerful and persuasive. The *Short Account* still shocks as much today as it did more than 400 years ago. Other reformers, such as Guaman Poma, would emulate Las Casas’ use of counter-invention, as we will see in Chapter four.

Other Reformers

Las Casas was not the only person to call loudly for reform, nor was he the first. In fact, he had more allies than history often gives him credit for. Although not as charismatic as Las Casas, many of these other reformers were quite important as well. Like Las Casas, they were concerned with the emerging discursive construction of the native subject.
With the discovery and conquest of the American empires in Mexico and Peru, new notions of native identity, history, and rights began to be debated in Spain. Although it was easy, in 1512, for Matías de Paz and Juan López Palacios Rubios – the jurists that Ferdinand had given the task of determining the legal status of the natives – to dismiss the New World natives as not possessing a civil society, later contact with the more organized and impressive Mexica and Inca empires made such suppositions impossible.

By 1535, intellectuals, jurists, and theologians on both sides of the Atlantic were considering the issue of the legal and jurisprudential rights of natives and Spaniards and their respective duties in the New World. At issue were questions of jurisdiction and domain. In 1535, Vasco de Quiroga, the Franciscan bishop of Michoacán, wrote a document entitled Información en Derecho, which, although it would not be published until much later, was well-read by the colonial literary elite. In it, he asserted that the New World natives did not have the right to dominium jurisdictionis, that is, proper lordship over their own lands, because of some of the practices of their society. A proper society, according to Quiroga, is one in which the people observe natural law, have a king and an organized political life and do not worship multiple Gods. (Pagden 1991 49) Those qualifications did not apply to the Mexica, for example, as they venerated Moctezuma as a God.

In addition, any other smaller principality that had a similar, oligarchic ruler was likewise illegitimate, because if a ruler did not care for his people and only looked out for himself, he could legally be deposed by another power. In
other words, Quiroga asserted that in the legal definition of the term, none of the New World political entities was a legitimate republic. As a result, the lands had been legally unoccupied and ‘up for grabs,’ as it were, when the Spanish arrived. In spite of his belief in this theory, Quiroga should not be counted among apologists for the conquest: on the contrary, Quiroga also indicated that he did not believe that the Spanish were waging a ‘just war’ in the New World as defined by other legal precedents (Serrano Gassent 28).

Most of the legal precedents for Quiroga’s arguments came from the ancients, such as Aristotle, and as usual, their words were open to interpretation. There were many in Spain who did not agree with Quiroga’s idea that the natives did not have the rights to their own lands, and they, too, used these ancient sources to contradict his claims. One such man was the Dominican Francisco de Vitoria, the distinguished chair of the school of Theology at the University of Salamanca. In a series of lectures and in a famous conference in 1539 entitled De Indis, Vitoria and his disciples – who would become known as “la escuela de Salamanca” – laid out a series of arguments that refuted Spanish claims to ownership of the New World.

For years, the colonists had been using the argument that the New World natives were no more than brutes and were by nature slaves. This argument was based on a quote from Aristotle that some men were, by nature, slaves and best suited for servitude in the service of more advanced people. This application of Aristotle’s words had been attached to the Indians since John Major, a Scottish professor at the University of Paris, had first proposed it in 1510. It wasn’t much
of a legal argument, but it had sufficed for more than a generation as rationale for the enslavement of entire towns in the New World.

According to Vitoria, the Americans did not meet the criteria put forth by Aristotle because they had the minimum requirements for a civil society: that is to say, institutions such as marriage, laws, commerce, etc. They might be naive and brutish, he concludes, but they are not natural slaves in any legal sense. Vitoria eventually settles on a theory that the Indians are like children: lacking in many areas, but potentially as capable of reason and civil society as the Spanish. It is therefore the duty of the Spanish to act as a sort of ‘legal guardian’ for the Indians until such time as they achieve the societal maturity that they need to function in the world. This does not, however, give the Spanish any authority over the freedom of the natives. Thus, enslaving the Indians or taking their lands – including mineral wealth underneath the land – was to deprive the Indians of certain universal rights and was not only illegal but contrary to the will of God.

Vitoria questioned whether or not the Indians had the legal rights to their bodies, their work, their lands and natural resources such as mineral wealth. This issue of jurisprudence has the Latin name *dominium rerum.* According to tradition, in the course of history, ‘uncivilized’ peoples living in a more natural state had traded some of their rights in exchange for the benefits of society, such as security and a sense of moral unity. There were some natural, inherent rights, however, that were never traded away in this exchange, and the right of *dominium* – or ownership of one’s own body and belongings – was one of them. This right is a natural one – that is to say, it is linked to the individual and independent of any
particular society. This directly refuted what Juán López de Palacios Rubios and Matías de Paz had determined some thirty years before when the question first arose.

According to Vitoria, there were only four legal reasons to deny anyone their rights of *dominium* if they were sinners, infidels, idiots or *insensati* (insane). The question of sinners losing their rights of *dominium* was complicated. First of all, on a state/national level, Calvinists and other reformers had recently posited that princes who were sinners could be legally deposed, and Vitoria, a good Catholic, could not agree with them. In addition, Vitoria found himself in a legal and moral conundrum. To use an example, consider the case of a starving sinner. The sinner must choose between two sins: either let himself starve to death, or steal something to eat. Vitoria reaches the conclusion that since God would never allow one of his children to suffer a decision between two sins, then *dominium*, or ownership, must be independent of grace (Pagden 1991 38).

This notion – that *dominium* is independent of grace – also answers the question of whether infidels can have their lands and bodies taken from them. For Vitoria, only an act so despicable as to assure that the one who committed it is not human can provide grounds for the removal of that right. Cannibalism, sacrifice, and paganism are, he understands, grave sins, but none of them are so horrific as to prove that the actor is not human (Pagden 1991 39). As for idiots and insane people, those terms do not apply to the Indians, who had cities and governments of their own, even if those governments were considered to be inferior to the Spanish model.
With the question of the rights of the Indians settled, Vitoria turned to the rights of the Spanish in the New World. Under the concept of *ius gentium* – or the rights of all people – Vitoria found some concepts that applied to the conquest. He found, that with certain limits, the Spanish had the right to travel (*ius peregrinandi*), the right to commerce (*communicatio*), and the right to spread their religion (*ius predicandi*). Vitoria reached the conclusion that if any native society denied these rights to the Spanish, then a just war could be waged and the people taken as slaves. However, he felt that the Indians had given no such cause for just war and the attacks against the Indians must cease.

Vitoria also rejected other grounds for the conquest and occupation of the New World. There were some who felt that the sins of the New World natives, such as sodomy, human sacrifice, incest and cannibalism, were so great that the Spanish could do what they wished, in effect, as punishment. Vitoria argued that there were other sins, just as bad, committed by Europeans, such as theft, fornication and homicide, and it was up to civil authorities to punish. As for those who felt that God had led the Spanish to the New World, Vitoria simply did not agree, and even if it were the case, the Spanish were sinning greatly in the New World. If God had given it to them, then surely He was disappointed (Traboulay 104).

One other sticky question that was raised time and time again by the reformers was the question of ‘just war.’ A war could only be just if it were carried out against some enemy of the state. Las Casas mentioned Moors and Turks who had attacked and/or seized Spanish lands as examples of when to wage
a just war (Pagden 1992 xxxix). The Incas, Aztecs, and other native groups that had been annihilated by the Spanish simply didn’t qualify: they had never attacked without provocation. In this, Las Casas was not alone: there were many questioning just war in Spain at the time.

The arguments among Vasco de Quiroga, Las Casas, Vitoria, Sepúlveda, and others often included a definition of what was considered a civil society or not, which is linked to the concept of just war. Any writer, such as Sepúlveda or Quiroga for example, that posited that the New World natives had not achieved a proper civil society and therefore could be legally conquered and enslaved brought the question of political history into the ongoing process of the construction of native subjectivity. In a similar fashion, those writers such as Las Casas or Vitoria that refuted those claims in effect argued that the natives had achieved a civil society and also brought political history into the debate.

This use, however, of the question of civil society (and whether or not even the more ‘advanced’ Mexica and Incas had achieved it) overlooked what little was known (or invented) about New World history, preferring instead to focus on the present, or at least on the state of those two nations at the time of their conquest. How the Inca Empire had been founded, for example, was not considered. In other words, some of those involved in the debate felt that the laws, culture, and in particular the customs (which included cannibalism and human sacrifice) of the New World natives meant that they had not reached a civil society as defined by the ancient Greeks and Romans. Others felt that New World laws, commerce, and clear leadership showed that they were, in fact, a
civil society by definition. These attempts to make New World civil society fit into European notions of government was one of many ways in which native subjectivity was created by Europe.

Vitoria’s conclusions were bad news for defenders of the conquest:

“Vitoria había dejado así a la corona de Castilla en endeble derecho al *dominium jurisdictionem* en América, pero sin ninguna clase de derechos de propiedad.”

(Pagden 1991 44) (“Vitoria thus left the crown of Castille with an undeniable right of *dominium jurisdictionem* in America, but without any sort of property rights.”)

Vitoria died in 1546, but his disciples continued to question the ongoing hegemonic construction of New World legal subjectivity. In 1546, Melchor Cano revisited the question of native legal rights, pointing out a contradiction in Aristotle’s original definition of natural slavery and taking up a point that Las Casas had begun to argue as early as 1519. A slave, according to Aristotle, was anyone who had been deprived of their natural free state (Pagden 1991 45). If the free state was ‘natural,’ then no one could legally be a slave by definition. Matías de Paz had said something similar back in 1513, but had declared that the civil precedent for slavery overrode other arguments. Cano also pointed out a contradiction in the philosophy of those who claimed that evangelizing and helping the Indians was an act of charity. According to Cano, one cannot accomplish an act of charity if an act of conquest was first necessary to do so. Cano even contradicted Vitoria, his mentor, rejecting the Spanish right of *ius peregrinandi*, or the right to travel, as that right, as understood by Vitoria, would
deny legitimate rulers – such as the King of Spain – the right to restrict the travel of foreigners in their lands.

Cano took up the question of Spanish rights to the Indian labor. He concluded that the Indians, under the *encomienda* system, had given up the rights to their labor in exchange for military protection and religious instruction. However, this exchange was only legal as long as it was voluntary, which was certainly questionable in reality:

Being held in trust (*encomienda*) was not the same thing as being a slave, although in some respects the differences were minor. First, slavery usually signified ownership of an individual or a group of individuals, whereas *encomiendas* were trusteeships over the labor of a community. This was a technical distinction: a community’s rather than an individual’s labor was controlled. (Seed 2001 65)

By the 1530’s, the church was getting involved in the question of native rights under Spanish rule. In 1537, Pope Paul II issued a bull, *Sublimis Deus*, in which he declared that the Indians were truly man and capable of Christianization. In spite of this, natives were restricted from the priesthood. In 1526, the Franciscans opened the College of Santiago Tlatelolco not far from Mexico City. The goal of the school was to train the sons of native rulers for the priesthood, and the students were taught Latin and other traditional subjects. Although the students did well, anti-native sentiment in the colonies and in the church meant
that none were ever ordained: “From 1555 to 1591, natives were formally prohibited from receiving ordination” (Traboulay 95).

The question of native rights vis-à-vis the church was a complicated one. In 1540, the Franciscan bishop Juan de Zumárraga brought heresy and idolatry charges against a native cacique, Chichimecacatecotl (whose Christian name was Carlos de Mendoza). In spite of a lack of witnesses and questionable evidence, Mendoza was burned at the stake. The resulting scandal led to a continuation of native immunity from persecution for heresy and idolatry, at least for a while (Elkin 26).

The reformers had some very powerful and convincing arguments, and they had their victories. The combination of Las Casas’ New World testimony and Vitoria’s legal research led to the passing of the New Laws of 1542. These reformers were determined to change the invention of the Americans from “Slave” to “Citizen,” and they partially succeeded. Most importantly, they raised the national consciousness of the Kingdom of Spain and in the rest of Europe in regards to what was going on in the New World. By the end of the reign of Charles V, the legal invention of the New World natives had taken a new path: they had more rights than they had since before the conquest.

The reformers were not unopposed, however. The colonial economic powers that brought about the repeal of parts of the New Laws did more than lynch viceroys – they fought back with arguments of their own. One such response to the reformers was given by the mercenary intellectual Juán Ginés de
Sepúlveda. When he went head-to-head with Las Casas, it became one of the great human rights debates in history.

Response to the Reformers

Not everyone in Spain and the New World agreed with Las Casas and his fellow reformers (he was, in fact, widely reviled by some sectors of colonial society). Those with economic interests in the New World eventually felt that they had to respond to the reformers and reinforce the hegemonic construction of the New World subject as slave, laborer and subaltern. The most famous of their attempts was enlisting the scholar Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda to write a treatise that would defend their interests. His work, *The Second Democrats; or The Just Causes of the War against the Indians*, was written between 1544 and 1548 and it was, according to Anthony Pagden, “one of the most virulent onslaughts on the Indians ever written” (Pagden 1992 xxviii). According to Sepúlveda, native paganism, cannibalism, and brutish culture, appearance and behavior meant that they were destined – by God – to be slaves to a higher culture.

Sepúlveda cast the natives as brutes who not only deserved slavery but would benefit from it, basing his conclusions on a section from Aristotle’s *Politics*, in which Aristotle claimed that some men were slaves by nature and that it was in their own best interests to be ruled by those stronger than they. In the debate at Valladolid, in which Sepúlveda dueled Las Casas for the right to publish his book, Sepúlveda concentrated on two points: first, what justified war against
the Indians? Second, how should the war be waged? The answer to the first question was that since the Spaniards were obviously superior to the natives, they had the right to rule over them as they saw fit.

Sepúlveda reinforced his assertion of Spanish superiority with numerous examples of native character. He described them as uncivilized brutes, constantly waging war among themselves before the arrival of the Spanish, ate human flesh, practiced idolatry, and showed extreme cowardice in battle. Conquering them was in their own best interests, to save them from themselves. They were all people in need of good lordship, and if the Indians were natural slaves, then the Spanish were natural masters: “Their (the natives’) brutish behavior, absence of any recognizable culture, their cowardice...their supposed cannibalism and their paganism, all clearly indicated that God had intended them to be slaves to those whose ‘magnanimity, temperance, humanity and religion’ – by whom Sepúlveda meant the Spaniards – made them natural masters” (Pagden 1992 xxviii-xxix).

Regarding the question of how to wage just war against the natives, Sepúlveda was in favor of the requerimiento, the ritualistic reading of the documents that Juan López de Palacios Rubios had written up in 1513. The requerimiento ordered native populations to surrender peacefully and accept Christianization or face attack, and were often regarded as ridiculous because, among other problems, the natives did not understand Spanish. Sepúlveda felt that if the letter of the requerimiento were adhered to, and the Indians were approached and if they surrendered without resorting to violence, then none would befall them. In the event of armed resistance, it was acceptable to
subjugate the Indians, because in order to teach them the word of God it was necessary for them to be subjugated to hear it. Those natives who voluntarily accepted Spanish rule would be considered to be semi-free, whereas those who needed to be forcefully subjugated would be considered slaves. Like a child, they were to be given greater liberties as the good teachings of the Spanish sank in over time.

Sepúlveda’s treatise was controversial, and King Charles V convened learned theologians to decide whether or not to allow it to be published. Although Las Casas was not on the original committee that denied publication, Sepúlveda rightly deduced that he had been involved, and the two men held a debate in Valladolid in 1550-1551.

Las Casas had an answer for all of Sepúlveda’s assertions. He reversed Sepúlveda’s descriptions of the natures of the natives and the Spaniards, describing the peaceful lives of the natives and the bloody atrocities of the Spanish in the New World. He cast the Indians as Israelites to the Spanish Egyptians. As for the way to wage war on the natives, Las Casas answered with his theories on peaceful conversion, which had achieved some success in Guatemala.

At the end of their debate, Las Casas ‘defeated’ Sepúlveda. The authorities decided to deny Sepúlveda permission to print his work. The debate was a true case of one construction of native subjectivity confronting another: at the heart of the debate was nothing less than the identity and nature of the New World natives, and by extension their universal, civil and moral rights. Las Casas
and Sepúlveda were dueling over what Walter Mignolo would call the “colonial difference,” that invisible space that existed between the colonizer and colonized. In this case, it was Las Casas who would define some of the parameters of that space.

It was a bittersweet victory for Las Casas, however, as so many of the abuses he described in the New World continued apace. Such was the case with many of Las Casas’ projects: time and time again, he failed to create legislation that was beneficial to the natives in the New World, and when he did succeed in passing a reform, it was often not enforced in the colonies.

Although Sepúlveda was defeated, the war for the souls of the New World natives was not over. Within twenty years of the Valladolid debates, those who defended the conquest and enslavement of the New World would return with a new strategy: a new construction of native subjectivity not unlike Sepúlveda’s. We will consider this new invention in the next chapter. For now, we will continue to examine the invention of the New World natives during the reign of Charles V, this time through literature.

Literature in the Age of Reform

In the New World, there were two whole continents to explore. Back home in Spain, everyone from poor commoners to the high lords and ladies was fascinated by the exploits and adventures of the explorers and conquistadores. It was a magical combination, and literature with New World themes boomed.
Conquistadores and explorers wrote of their experiences and would-be historians wrote about the conquest and the history of the natives. All of these texts found eager audiences in Europe.

These books were more than simply popular ways for Europeans to learn of the exploits of soldiers in the new lands to the west, but were also instrumental in the hegemonic construction of native subjectivity. As such, they were more than simple tales and histories, they were tools of Empire. The books described, defined, constructed, imported and invented the native subject. These texts cast the natives as enemy combatants, slaves, pagans and soldiers of the devil and compared them to hated Old World races such as Jews and Moors.

There is no greater tool for the modern scholar seeking to map the creating of native subjectivity that was undertaken during the colonial period than the books, crónicas, histories and encyclopedias that were written, submitted and approved by the Spanish hegemony. In this section, I will consider the literature of this sort that was produced between 1521 and 1556.

In the Age of Reform, the most popular writers were no longer explorers such as Vespucci, but conquistadores such as Hernán Cortés, Bernal Diaz del Castillo and Pedro Cieza de León, along with writers of encyclopedias and histories such as Agustín de Zárate and Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo. The period is marked by several important milestones in the search for the history of the New World: the use of native histories as sources, the proposal of serious origin theories, and the first descriptions of advanced political systems in central Mexico and in the Andes.
There were three sorts of literature produced during this period which is relevant to this study. The first sort was reform literature, which sought to stamp out the injustice of the colonial system and was produced by Bartolomé de Las Casas and those like him. We have already briefly considered reform literature in the previous section, but we will return to some specific examples in the sections about political and origin history. The second sort was histories and encyclopedias, such as those produced by Agustín de Zárate and Gonzalo de Oviedo. They were early attempts to explain the phenomena of the Indies, everything from history to flora and fauna and native beliefs. Most of these also included a section on the history of the various conquests. The third type was those letters and stories written by the actual soldiers, such as Hernán Cortés and Pedro Cieza de León. These tend to be straightforward descriptions of fights and battles and often have little in the way of cultural invention of the native subject beyond superficial notions of “enemy.”

These texts: chronicles, histories, and reform literature, are varied and fascinating. Many are several hundred pages long. In this study, I only consider those sections of these texts that are relevant to my work. Specifically, I looked at cultural references, descriptions of the natives, and comparisons made between Old World and New World cultures, a process I defined in my introduction as ethno-historical association. Ethno-historical association was on the increase during this period, as serious scholars such as Oviedo and popular writers such as Zárate began to consider possible old world origins of New World peoples. Ethno-historical association, during the Spanish colonial period, was one of the
pillars upon which the process of construction of native subjectivity took place. As I searched ancient writers for evidence of a hegemonic definition of native subjectivity, there were two main lines of invention that I looked for: political history and origin history.

The political history of the New World first came into question during this period. The cultures of the New World often kept records of their lords and rulers, and it was possible for Spanish historians to transcribe and interpret these records. The sections on political history produced during this time were relatively free of judgment of these leaders, as we shall see. This is important, because it would change in the 1570’s as writers working in Peru began to write native political history with a certain slant that justified the continued occupation of the Americas.

As for the questions of the Old World origins of the New World natives – or ethno-historical association – speculation had already begun. Bernal Diaz del Castillo documents fellow soldiers speculating about a possible Jewish origin for the natives they encountered as early as 1518. During the Age of Conquest and Reform, however, several theories were proposed and seriously considered, such as the Carthaginian, Atlantis and Lost Tribes theories. We will consider them in depth shortly.

Before we get to origins and political history, however, a word is necessary about native sources. Any would-be historian, be they reformer, encyclopedia writer or conquistador, had to rely at least in part on native sources for their information. This reliance was a double-edged sword, however: they did
not trust their native sources, but they had no real alternative. Their descriptions of their native sources are telling.

Native Histories and the Spanish

In the early period of the Spanish colonial enterprise, the natives did not have much in the way of recorded history: the first ethnic groups with which the Spanish had any contact were in small tribes in the Caribbean, who had nothing recognizable as writing, and in any event they were mostly wiped out by conquest and disease before the Spanish could learn much about their history.

In Mexico and Peru, however, it was different. Different socio-ethnic groups, such as the Incas, Maya, and Aztecs, had differing systems for recording information. Once communication between the Spanish and the natives had been established, many historians asked the natives about their own history. The natives of New Spain (Mexico) had codices, or picture-books, the Andeans had their quipus (strings of knotted cords) and almost all of the cultures had oral traditions. Although many of the Spanish writers discussed in this study were, to some extent, impressed by these techniques, they could never fully accept their veracity. This fact would eventually give the Spanish the opportunity to re-write native history in such a way that it supported Spanish domination of the continent.

The New World natives, when asked, could tell of their origins, but they never mentioned any familiar points of reference to the Spanish (such as, say, a
knowledge of ancient Greek history) and in any event, the Spanish did not at all trust the natives’ record keeping, as they had no books:

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. People without letters were thought of as people without history, and oral narratives were looked at as incoherent and inconsistent. (Mignolo 1998 3)

The Spanish considered the book to be the only true way of recording memory and history. It was more than a simple belief or bias: the book, as a recording device, had a special, quasi-religious status:

Christianity is not, of course, the only religion having a holy book or scriptures (e.g. the Koran, the Torah). But it shares with those others the disequilibrium of power between religions possessing the Book and those without it...What is important here is not the ‘content’ of the Book but rather the very existence of the object in which a set of regulations and metaphors was inscribed, giving to it the special status of Truth and Wisdom (Mignolo 1995 82-83).
In this passage, Mignolo is, of course, writing about the bible, but his statement can be amplified in this specific case to include all of the ancient authorities who were consulted regarding the New World, such as Aristotle and Seneca. Their words could also be found in books and whose status approached that of the bible, in terms of whether it was authoritative knowledge or not.

I have found many contradictions in Spanish writing about native record-keeping techniques. The Spanish were impressed, and as they often had to rely on local history, they would occasionally praise these techniques. Nevertheless, they also disparaged and dismissed these techniques. Many writers, such as Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa and José de Acosta, did both. Agustín de Zárate is a good example to consider.

In the middle of the sixteenth century, Zárate, a Spanish historian, sought answers to his historical questions from native sources in his 1555 history *Historia del descubrimiento y conquista de la provincia del Perú*. Like many of his fellow historians, Zárate included a section on local beliefs. Also like many of his fellow historians, he was not slow to urge his readers to take it all with a grain of salt: “Como los indios no tenyan escriptura (según es dicho), no saben al origen de su creación ni el fin que tuvo el mundo en el diluuio…” (50) (“Since the Indians had no writing, so it is said, they do not know the origin of their creation, nor do they know of the great flood and the end of the world it brought…”). The rest of the passage is littered with phrases such as “creen que…” (“they believe that…”) just in case anyone missed the unreliability that Zárate mentioned in his
first lines. This unreliability forced Zárate to see if there was any grain of historic “truth” in what he had heard.

Searching for any correlation between his own history and what he was hearing from his sources, Zárate found that some of his sources mentioned a flood. The Indians were aware of the great flood, concluded Zárate, but had no knowledge of Noah. They claimed that their ancestors survived the flood by hiding in mountain caves. Local legend had it that the men in the caves sent out their dogs first, and when the dogs returned dry, they knew it was safe. Any parallel between the Andean’s dogs and Noah’s dove was lost on Zárate, who seemed totally unwilling to find any biblical reference in the New World. He even took them to task for their “faulty” remembrance of the flood: “Ymaginen y fingen que en las cueuas se escaparon” (51) “They imagine and pretend that they escaped in the caves.”

Zárate, like so many other colonial era writers, structured this section in such a way as to cast a great amount of doubt on the credibility of the natives and their histories. He somewhat dutifully recorded what he had been told, but it is obvious that he considered it to be fantasy, and even (in the case of the flood) corrected his native sources: they must have forgotten the whole part about Noah, he reasoned, and somehow replaced it with the idea of living in a cave.

Why is it so important that the Spanish did not (or would not) trust native histories? The answer lies in invention. History and subjectivity are linked. Who you are descended from and who you are related to is part of who you are. Since the native histories could not be trusted, this gave the Spanish an opportunity to
partially define the native subject by writing their own histories. It was an opportunity, and one that later writers would fully exploit in their quest to construct a new subject identity for Spain’s newest citizens.

Mid-century writers gave little credence to native sources, but they continued in their quest to write histories nevertheless, blending observation, ancient history, and local traditions in a fascinating mix. In this next section, I will consider the literature of the period and take a look at many of the most popular theories.

American Political History in the Age of Reform

...in olden times there was great disorder in this kingdom we call Peru, and that the natives were stupid and brutish beyond belief. They say they were like animals, and that many ate human flesh, and others took their daughters and mothers to wife, and committed other even graver sins, and had great traffic with the devil, whom they served and held in great esteem. (Pedro Cieza de León 1959 25-26)

In the above quote, Cieza de León is referring to those who were the lords of the Peruvian Andes before the arrival of the Inca. His colorful description, he says, came to him via his sources, which mostly included native elders with whom he had spoken during his extensive travels in Peru. It was
sensational descriptions such as these that made chronicles such as Cieza’s very popular in the Spain of Charles V.

Cieza’s text was only one of several: there were other writers and historians that described the state of rule in the Andes before and during the time of the Inca. Cieza de León was probably the best historian of the lot. As a young man, he participated in the conquest as well as the civil wars in Peru and then returned to Spain in 1550 to turn his voluminous notes into a series of books.

Another popular writer was the aforementioned Zárate: his history became very popular in Spain. The missives written to the king of Spain by conquistador Hernán Cortés during the conquest of Central Mexico (1519-1522) also were circulated, and one of his soldiers, Bernal Díaz del Castillo, wrote a famous memoir during his old age in Guatemala. In this section, I will examine their impact on the creation of a political history of the New World.

Before the Inca: the early lords of the Andes

Cieza de León was responsible for many firsts, including being the first to describe the Pre-Inca inhabitants of the Andes. Cieza de León described having asked the local inhabitants “on many occasions” (Cieza de León 1959 25) about the pre-Inca and had gotten the answer that they were a brutish, uncivilized lot. Cieza de León was the first to use the term behetría to describe them: a behetría is a sort of chaotic, anarchic state. His descriptions of them and their practices were quite graphic.
Unlike later historians of Peru, Cieza de León did not reach any conclusions about whether or not the pre-Inca were the legitimate lords of their lands or whether the Inca subjugation of them was just or not, questions that would become a key component of the Toledans’ works twenty years later. He judges them only by their barbaric customs, which he seems to include as much for the sake of sensationalism as for the sake of history.

Many of Cieza de León’s thoughts were echoed by his contemporary, Agustín de Zárate, who reached the same conclusions about the pre-Inca. In one brief paragraph (Zárate 55) he described how, before the arrival of the Incas, there were local captains and no centralized government, as it were. He did not elaborate, but implied that the people were warlike. These people were then, in turn, subjugated by the expanding Inca Empire.

Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas contradicted the others. In his Apologética Historia, written over the course of several decades but finally compiled around 1561, he devoted two chapters to the pre-Inca. He describes the pre-Inca as a series of well ordered communities, each of which was led by a sort of patriarch. It was, he says, a “very natural” system (Las Casas 2004 81). Las Casas refuted some of the other claims made by Cieza de León and Zárate. He wrote that cannibalism did not exist among the pre-Inca (Las Casas 2004 82), nor did they marry close family members (86). They were skilled farmers and had an admirable system of community food sharing.

In terms of the construction of native subjectivity, none of the writers, except perhaps Las Casas, seemed to feel that the history of the pre-Inca was in
any way related to the status of the Andean natives in the mid sixteenth century. Pre-Inca history had happened long ago, and was no longer terribly relevant to contemporary native character. 

In addition, none of these three writers addressed the question of whether or not the pre-Inca held title to their lands as legitimate rulers. Their question of their rights would be asked later, during the time of Viceroy Toledo in Peru, as we shall see in the next chapter.

The Reign of the Inca

The Inca consolidated their Empire in the Andes two to three centuries before the arrival of the Spaniards, absorbing the smaller city-states and cultures. The situation in Peru was different from that in Mexico, where a series of strong empires came and went before the Aztecs. In Peru, the Incas were the first true empire.

According to Cieza de León, the Inca did much to improve things for those they conquered: “They did great things, and governed so well that few in the world excel them...They instilled good customs in all their subjects...” (Cieza de León 1959 26) The conquest of the separate tribes was also done in a fair way: according to Cieza de León, after the Incas conquered the Huancas, Lloque Yupanqui forbade looting and freed the prisoners taken. The Huancas were so impressed that “…cognizant of the favor and clemency which he had used toward them after they were conquered, came to speak with him and promised to live
henceforth in keeping with the laws of the Lord-Incas of Cuzco…” (Cieza de León 1959 118)

As for the Inca themselves, Cieza de León was quite impressed by them. He implied that the Andeans were generally quite content under Inca rule:

“Everywhere they came to worship the sun and take over the customs of the Incas, to such a degree that it seemed that all had been born in Cuzco, and they loved (Topa Inca) and revered him so much that they called him Father of All, good Inca, the lover and the arm of justice.” (Cieza de León 1959 77) He compared a road built by the Inca to ones built by Alexander the Great (Cieza de León 1959 138).

Cieza de León’s respect and admiration did not stop at the road-building and governance of the Inca. He also, at one point, makes a point of defending the nature of the Indians. He admits that while some of the Indians were guilty of some sins such as cannibalism and sodomy, there were other Indians that disapproved of those practices. He therefore excuses them: “…it would be unjust to condemn them all. And even these evils which they committed have the excuse that they lacked the light of our Holy Faith, and for that reason they were unaware of the wrong they were doing.” (Cieza de León 1959 266)

Las Casas, who was a personal friend of Cieza de León, echoed much of his praise. The Inca were generous to those they defeated, and no battle lasted longer than was necessary to resolve it: quarter was always granted to the enemy.

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14 In making this argument, he may have been influenced by his friend, Bartolomé de Las Casas. In fact, Las Casas is mentioned in Cieza de León’s will – he wanted Las Casas to see to the publication of some of his unpublished works (Von Hagen lxxiv).
so that the people who had been at war could forgive each other sooner (Las Casas 2004 26). The rulers were fair-handed, and always distributed excess food to the poor:

Y lo que para reyes gentiles y sin lumbre de fé, y aun para reyes católicos y buenos cristianos, es cosa de grande ejemplo e imitable, que tenían tanto cuidado de los pobres, que cada vez que los depósitos se renovaban, todo lo que en estos había de lo viejo, se repartía por los pobres, comenzando de las viudas y huérfanos y otras personas necesitadas. (Las Casas 2004 32)

They set a good example for unenlightened and catholic kings alike. They took very good care of the poor: every time they replaced their food reserves, they took all of the old food and gave it to the poor, starting with widows and orphans and others in great need.

Zárate was a little bit less effusive in his praise of the Inca than Cieza de León and Las Casas. In his discussion of the Incas, Zárate singled out one, Guaynacaua, as an exceptional leader:

Por la sucesión destos yngas vino al señorío a uno dellos que se llamó Guaynacaua (que quiere dezir “mancebo rico”) que fue el
que más tierras ganó y acrecentó a su señorío y el que más justicia y razón tuuo en la tierra, y la reduxo a la policía y cultura tanto que parecía cosa imposible una gente bárbara y sin letras regirse con tanto concierto y orden… (56)

In the procession of those Incas came to reign one who was called Guaynacaua (which means “rich young man”) who was the one who won the most lands, enlarging his realm, and he was also the most just and reasonable man in the land, and contributed so much to order and culture that it seems almost impossible to us that such a man could come from such a barbarous, illiterate people…

Here, Guaynacaua is heartily praised as a leader, but it this is nevertheless a backhanded compliment, as Zárate marvels that such a barbaric and illiterate people could produce such a leader. Guaynacaua is therefore presented, on the one hand, as something of an anomaly, and also it is implied that such a brutish people need a good leader such as Guaynacaua.

Nevertheless, Zárate, although not as impressed with the Inca as Cieza de León was, did not consider them to be necessarily illegitimate rulers in their own land. He judged them, and looked down on them for many of their practices, but he did not link the shortcomings of the Inca to the appropriateness of the Spanish conquest.
There were other works written at this time which were quite popular in Spain. Although these other writers – I am referring to the conquistadores Bernal Diaz del Castillo and Hernán Cortés – did not contain much political or origin history, they were nevertheless quite important because they were so widely read.

Like Cieza de León, Bernal Diaz del Castillo was a former conquistador who took up the pen late in life to tell his story. Although Bernal Diaz wrote his History of the Conquest of New Spain in the 1560’s (and therefore somewhat later than the others), he was an old man, writing in the remote territory of Guatemala where he was isolated from any sort of debate about the nature of the natives and it is my opinion that his work belongs to the mid-century period.

Bernal Diaz wrote from the perspective of a soldier who left any debates about the nature of the natives to his captains and the holy men. The natives who appear in his story are either allies to be mistrusted or enemies to be defeated, and he rarely questioned their history or origins. His style is straightforward and honest, and strangely devoid of emotion considering the things he had seen. Here, he describes the capital of the Aztecs and its ruler: “Some readers who have visited New Spain, and other interested persons who have not, may be aware that Mexico was a very large city, built in the water like Venice, and governed by a great prince called Montezuma, who was king of many neighboring lands and ruled over the whole of New Spain, which is a country twice the size of our own.”

(35) Bernal Diaz represents a soldier’s perspective on the wars of conquest: he is included here to show that the footmen of the conquest did not ever think about
such questions as just war or the propriety of the encomienda system: those were not questions for them.

Hernán Cortés was also a fighter, not a writer. The bold captain of the small group of conquistadores who defeated the mighty Aztec Empire, Cortés did effect an invention of the natives that suited him: in his letters to the king, he continually described the natives he met as worthy subjects, bolstering his claim that he was adding valuable lands to the crown. Without ever examining the actual history of Mexico, he accused its rulers of tyranny much as the Toledans would later do in Peru:

...on hearing from me of your Majesty and of his great and royal state they declared themselves willing to be the subjects of your Majesty and my friends, begging me to defend them from that lord who ruled them by force and tyranny...But since that time they have been ever sure and loyal servants to your Majesty and I think they will ever remain so having been delivered from the tyranny of Muteczuma and always being treated with kindness and consideration by myself. (Cortés 33)

There are several things to note in the preceding passage. First of all, Cortés reinforces the idea of a ‘tyrannical’ Montezuma, which implies that the natives are better off with Spanish rule than with native rule. He reinforces the natives as simplistic by claiming that they respond to kindness and consideration.
He also shows that the natives are willing subjects of the Spanish crown, who invited Cortés and his men to defend them.

Although Cortés is not writing a history, he is nevertheless inventing the natives politically. Unlike Bernal Díaz, Cortés does construct a native identity: they are simple and loyal. In the next chapter, we will see how skillful writers combined the two concepts—tyrannical native rule with history—to invent the natives as poor rulers who needed the Spanish and would revert to poor administrative practices and idolatry without them.

Once native histories had been dismissed and the Spanish had the opportunity to “create” history for their new subjects, a door was opened for a hegemonic discourse that began to define native character.

For now, we’ll move to the parallel subject of origins in the age of reform.

Origins in the Age of Reform

The reform period marks the beginning of several important origin theories. It was during this time period in which New World peoples would first be associated with Old World races, a process I refer to as ethno-historical association. There were several theories: the two most important ones (during this period at least) were the Carthaginian and Atlantis theories, which were developed by Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo and Agustín de Zárate respectively.
Oviedo, whose early life as a writer of fiction had become cut short when Erasman thought made fiction novels unpopular with the Spanish lettered class, found his genre when he wrote a comprehensive history of the New World. Modeling his work on Pliny, he sought to create a work that would encompass America as a whole, dealing with history, nature, flora and fauna, etc, but with one key difference: “he rejected Pliny’s written sources and replaced them with his own direct experience” (Mignolo 1995 197). His first-hand account of the wonders of the New World increased his popularity and prestige as an historian.

In terms of culture, Oviedo was, in a sense, a sound ethnician. He wrote detailed descriptions of local customs as he understood them. His *Historia General* is interesting because it is the first major work on the New World that is not a chronicle, but a history. Oviedo is also the first to specifically propose origin theories as such. Others had speculated, but he was the first to seriously research in the works of the ancients and look for clues that they knew of the New World. He was the first to give the question serious thought and take the time to write extensively about it.

Oviedo was the first to seriously propose and describe the Carthaginian theory, which would persist for the duration of the origin debate. The theory was that the Americas had been first explored and settled by the Carthaginians, a North African culture that fought several wars with the ancient Roman Empire. He based this theory on a passage in which Aristotle claims that Carthaginian sailors discovered lands west of the Pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar). The land was very good, but the leaders of Carthage decided not to colonize, and also
condemned to death all of the sailors who had seen it, so that their enemies could not discover and colonize it either.

Even though the Carthaginian theory would be the one for which Oviedo was best remembered, it was not his favorite. He preferred the theory that the New World was in fact the Hesperides Islands, so named for the twelfth king of Spain, Héspero, who ruled around 1658 B.C. Basically, he stated that Spaniards had discovered the islands, then vacant, at that time. Columbus’ act of discovery was ordained by God to bring the lost lands back to their true owner: Spain. It was a predestined event that smacked of millenarism. Like many of his peers, Oviedo saw divine significance in what was happening around him. When Oviedo continues the divine history of the world into his present, he is engaging in allegoresis, which is the written attribution of divine meaning to current events.

Interestingly, Oviedo’s book brought about a swift and vocal reaction from Fernando Columbus, son of Christopher Columbus, who felt that by promoting the Hesperides theory, Oviedo was tarnishing the accomplishments of his father. In terms of construction of native subjectivity, Oviedo did not add much, at least in terms of origins. The theories for which he was remembered – Carthage and Hesperides – are not theories which necessarily pass judgment on native identity. The Carthage theory does – to a point, if the implication is that New World natives are North Africans, but Oviedo does not make that connection. All in all, Oviedo did not participate much in the process of the invention/construction of the New World native. In any event, once he has described a few theories,
Oviedo does not delve any deeper into the questions of origins, but he was very important because of the various origin theories that began with him.

Another influential and popular writer to work during this period was Agustín de Zárate, whose *Historia del descubrimiento y conquista de la provincia del Perú* was printed in 1555. He is best known today for being an ardent supporter of the Atlantis theory, in which he claims that the New World was settled by Atlanteans before the great continent sank. The Atlantis theory has its roots in the works of Plato, who had written about the “lost continent.” In his section on the Atlantis theory, he includes some telling descriptions of the Indians:

La gente que habita debaxo de la línea y en las faldas della tienen los gestios ajudíados, hablan...como moros, son dado al pecado nefando, a cuya causa maltratan sus mugeres y hazen poco caso dellas, y andan trasquiladas sin otra vestidura más que unos pequeños refaxos con que cubren sus vergüenzas… (Zárate 33)

The people that live beneath the (equinoctial) line and nearby have a Jewish manner, talk...like Moors, are fond of base sins15, because of which they are cruel to their wives and pay them little mind, and they walk about with no other clothing than some small garment to cover their private parts…

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15 Colonial era writers who mention ‘base sins’ are referring to sodomy and/or homosexuality.
Zárate did not connect the concepts of Atlantis with that of the natives being similar to Jews and Moors. He did not theorize that ancient Jews or Moors crossed the ocean by way of Atlantis, nor did he go so far as to suggest that the Indians were descended from Jews or Moors. But he did compare them, in manner and speech, and as he follows this assertion with other negative reports—the Indians are sinners, cruel to their women, and wear little clothing (read: lascivious)—we can safely infer that being compared to a Jew or Moor was a very negative thing. This is one of the first examples of ethno-historical association, the process by which a New World race is compared to an Old World culture regarded as negative. This comparison is a form of invention by association. It would not be until later that anyone thought to attempt to prove direct ancestry. Although Zárate was not the first to link the Indians to ‘negative’ Old World races, he is representative of a growing tendency to do so in the post-Las Casas era.

The boom in origin theories in the mid-century time period reflects a growing interest in attempting to learn where the New World cultures had originated. But a close examination shows that the negative theories—such as Israelite and Carthaginian (or North African) theories—continued to be popular. I refer to these theories as negative because in the atmosphere of fear in Spain of Jews and Muslims, being compared to them (as the New World natives were) was not a compliment. More positive theories—such as Greek or Spanish theories—were still present, as were some of the more off-the-wall theories such as Atlantis
or Ophir. Before long, these theories would incline even more toward the negative.

Chapter Two Conclusion:

In 1556, Charles V abdicated his thrones in favor of his son Phillip II. Phillip inherited an empire in conflict: Protestantism had not gone away, and wars with England and France were on the horizon. For all of the wealth produced by his empire, Phillip would face constant financial woes.

As the reign of Charles V came to an end, the status of the New World natives was still very much up in the air. The age of conquest and reform was ending, and yet the greatest debate of the era: that over the rights of the New World natives – was still unresolved.

It was a stalemate of sorts. The reformers had broadcast the horrors of the Spanish conquest and occupation to the world, and the Black Legend was making the rounds in Protestant nations. Las Casas, Vitoria and others had proven that the New World natives had rights under civil, moral, and spiritual precedents – and they had proved that these rights were being trampled in the colonies. The reformers were right, and they knew it.

For Charles V, however, things were not that simple. The colonies brought in a lot of money to Spanish coffers, and the settlers had resisted any attempts at reform. The crown had on more than one occasion narrowly escaped
seeing one or more of its colonies break off and declare independence. There were real fears at court that the colonists would only accept so much reform before breaking out in a full-blown rebellion. In addition, the Council of Indies was generally favorable to colonial economic interests.

The creation of histories of the New World was still relatively free from the effects of this debate. The battle of invention – slaves or free men? – was still being played out in court and in the universities, not in the history books.

That was all about to change. The construction of native subjectivity, the one that had defined the New World natives as slaves, sinners, pagans and victims, was breaking down under the relentless assaults of the reformers. This construction had legal, civil, moral and religious elements and it had permitted the initial conquest, exploration and subjugation of the New World in the first years of the sixteenth century. It was not going to last much longer, however.

A new native subject would have to be created. It would have to be one that took the work of the reformers into account and reflected new thinking concerning the Spanish colonial enterprise. Above all, however, it had to define native character in such a way that it allowed – or better yet, encouraged – the continued Spanish presence in the New World. As the second half of the sixteenth century dawned, Spanish historians realized that the answer to their sovereign’s problems was right in front of them: native history. The dismissal of

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16 Cristobal de Olid, one of Cortés’ lieutenants, had attempted to establish a nation in the jungles of Honduras before being captured and killed. Also, many of Pizarro’s men in Peru had urged him to establish himself as king in the newly-conquered area.
native histories as inaccurate and tainted had opened the door for a new construction of native subjectivity based on their history.

It would happen during the administration of Viceroy Francisco de Toledo in Peru.
CHAPTER 3: PHILIP II AND THE TOLEDANS, 1556-1581

It is a thing worthy to be noted, for the fact that besides being a thing certain and evident the general tyranny of these cruel and tyrannical Incas of Peru against the natives of the land, may be easily gathered from history, and any one who reads and considers with attention the order and mode of their procedure will see, that their violent Incaship was established without the will and election of the natives who always rose with arms in their hands on each occasion that offered for rising against their Inca tyrants who oppressed them, to get back their liberty. Each one of the Incas not only followed the tyranny of his father, but also began afresh the same tyranny by force, with deaths, robberies and rapine...Moreover, and this is above all to be noted, to understand the worst aims of these tyrants and their horrid avarice and oppression, they were not satisfied with being evil tyrants to the natives, but also to their own proper sons, brothers and relations, in defiance of their own laws and statutes, they were the worst and
most pertinacious tyrants with an unheard-of inhumanity.

(Sarmiento de Gamboa 190-191)

-Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, 1572.

Let us count the charges that Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa levels against the Inca in the first part of chapter seventy of his *History of the Incas*. They are tyrannical – Sarmiento de Gamboa certainly makes that clear – but they also rule against the will of the people, they are violent, lawless, degenerate, greedy and inhuman to all who surround them, friend and foe alike. They treat their families poorly, and the ‘tyranny’ of the Inca seems to be hereditary: it is passed from father to son across generations. Sarmiento de Gamboa calls these conclusions “evident” to anyone who has been in Peru or who has had the opportunity to read any of the multiple histories that had preceded his own work in the middle of the sixteenth century.

Sarmiento de Gamboa makes himself clear: the reader certainly knows where he stands. The question is why he was so vehement about it: by 1572 the ruling Inca family was long gone, and no longer considered a serious threat to Spanish power. In fact, that very year, Viceroy Francisco de Toledo ordered the execution of fifteen year old Tupac Amaru, last of the royal Inca line, and any native hopes of a return to Inca rule died with him. Why, then, did Sarmiento de Gamboa bother kicking the corpse of the Inca royal family in his history?
The answer, surprisingly, had little to do with events in the New World and everything to do with legal and jurisprudential questions being raised in Spain as well as with political and religious concerns of Philip II’s Hapsburg Empire. Sarmiento de Gamboa was responding to the charges of the reformers, whose movement had been gaining momentum in Spain, and justifying the Spanish conquest and continued presence in the New World. As a result, he constructed native subjectivity in such a way that native character was deemed incapable of self-rule.

This was nothing new: apologists had defended the Spanish presence in the New World with a variety of justifications, including everything from millenarist Divine Will (God was punishing the Indians for being sinners and had chosen the devout Spanish as the instrument of his wrath) to a humanitarian mission (the Indians needed Christianity) to the notion that the natives were somehow sub-human (Aristotle’s ‘natural slave’ theory). We have already considered these justifications in previous chapters. These inventions of the natives: as sinners, as sub-humans, as pawns in God’s Divine Plan – didn’t hold up to the scrutiny of the mid-century reform movement led by Las Casas and Vitoria. Sarmiento de Gamboa was different in that he proposed a new discursive construction of native subjectivity, and based it in history: the invention of the Americans, in particular the Inca, as tyrannical usurpers, unfit to govern.

In this chapter, I will show how the question of native history – which should have been a dry, scientific exercise – became instead one of the principal
discursive battlefields upon which the debate over the conquest and enslavement
of the New World was fought. It constituted a discursive space within which
native subjectivity was argued, processed and established. It was a battlefield of
subjectivity, in which the Spanish stood to win the right to define native identity,
and define it in such a way that permitted continued Spanish enslavement and
domination of the New World. History was complicit in the exploitation of the
Americas: it was almost like a legal case. The battle was waged not between the
Spanish and the natives, but rather between those Spanish who wished to continue
the economic exploitation of the natives on one hand and reformers who wanted
to end the horrors of the colonial period on the other. Ironically, the natives
themselves were almost entirely excluded from discursive space in which the
creation of their subject identity took place, and therefore absent from the process
of their own invention and definition.

The period of time covered in this chapter is 1556 to 1581. The dates
correspond to the 1556 abdication of Charles V in favor of his son, Philip II, and
the duration of the rule in Peru of Viceroy Francisco de Toledo (1569 to 1581).
When Philip II inherited his father’s empire, he inherited with it a set of
headaches and problems, many of which got worse before getting better in spite
of his skills as an organizer and a lot of hard work. One such headache was the
ever-increasing cries of protesters and reformers who questioned the occupation
of the New World on every conceivable level, from spiritual to legal to moral. By
1565 or so, as we shall see, the reformers were in danger of gaining the upper
hand in Spanish society and possibly forcing some very costly changes in New World colonial policy.

The first part of this chapter is about Philip II and the many problems he faced, which included costly international wars, religious intolerance in his realm, influential reformers in the New World and constant shortage of funds. All of these pressures combined to create a situation in which a beleaguered king could not afford costly reforms in the New World that much of Spain agreed were necessary. Philip fought many wars, never had enough money to do so, and was constantly on the watch for heretics such as crypto-Jews, Muslims, and Protestants.

It is often impossible to separate a particular literary moment in time from the situation that produced it. The politics of the mid to late sixteenth century are particularly relevant when discussing the literature that was produced. In this case, a very specific combination of factors – Philip’s financial problems, a veiled threat by Rome to take away their blessing of Spain’s colonial project, the situation of Moors and Jews in Spain, the pressure of the reformers – created a situation that was supremely relevant to the construction of the native subject. The hegemonic invention of the native did not occur in a vacuum, and in order to understand it, we must understand the situation that produced it.

The second half of this chapter is dedicated to a close look at the historical literature of the period. In particular, I examine three texts that were sent from the New World to Spain in 1572. The first is a letter from Viceroy Francisco de Toledo to the king, the second is a letter from Alvaro Ruiz de
Navamuel (Toledo’s personal scribe) to the king, and the third is Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa’s *History of the Incas*. All three deal, in part, with Inca history and the question of legitimate rule. As we shall see, it amounted to a new invention of the New World natives, through their history, which “proved” that the natives were better off under Spanish rule.

Philip II’s World

Philip II inherited a vast realm from his father, Charles V, when he assumed the throne in 1556. Optimism was high in Spain for the young king and his ambitious projects. However, many crises had been brewing that would test Philip II constantly during his long reign. “Ten years into Philip’s reign, however, this was an empire facing a real or perceived threat of dissolution. On almost every side there were challenges to its stability and integrity” (Poole 102). The Protestant revolution was sweeping across northern Europe, and many Christian nations would eventually embrace it.

The Jews, once thought to be eradicated from Spain and its possessions, had been maintaining their old practices in secret. In Spain and the colonies, these former Jews who still practiced Judaism in secret were known as crypto-Jews17 and were feared by the ordinary Spanish citizens, as it was commonly believed that Jews regularly dealt with the Devil. Rounding them up, trying them,

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17 By the time of Philip II, there were very few Jews remaining in Spain. Those Jews and crypto-Jews that had found their way to the Netherlands or the New World mostly came from Portugal. They were still seen by the Inquisition as a serious threat, however.
and (often) executing them became a full-time job for the Inquisition. Even the Muslims had made a comeback, with the Turks attacking Spain and their allies in the Mediterranean. As if that were not enough, Spain was not even on friendly terms with the other Catholic nations in Europe, fighting an intermittent war with France for the duration of this period.

Meanwhile, in the New World, there were also problems for Philip to face. The first problem was communication: a round-trip message between Spain and the New World usually took several months (Burkholder and Johnson 79). As for the colonial elite, the wealthy landowners were so well entrenched that they were able to resist any reforms, and there was even some fear that the colonies might secede if their wishes were not respected in Spain.

At the same time, the voices of reformers such as Bartolomé de Las Casas were growing steadily louder and clearer. By 1565 or so, the reformers had proven to many in Spain that the conquest and occupation of the Indies was unjust morally, legally, and spiritually. They wanted strong laws to protect the natives, and some of them even wanted the Spanish to leave the New World entirely (which was out of the question given Philip’s financial woes). For Philip, the worst part was that the reformers had brought their case to Rome, where the Roman Catholic Church was threatening to get involved.

Philip II suffered from many more problems than the ones listed above, and many books have been written which study these problems18. In this dissertation, however, I will only consider those problems which had a direct

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18 One of my personal favorite books about Philip II is Stafford Poole’s Juan de Ovando: Governing the Spanish Empire in the Reign of Philip II.
influence on the invention of the New World native: costly wars abroad, the situation of Jews, Muslims and Protestants in Europe, the New World reformers, the church, and Philip’s financial woes. All of these situations converged to create a situation in which the New World native “needed” to be redefined legally, politically and socially: events in Europe dictated how the hegemonic Spanish minority constructed the native subject. I will begin with a discussion of Philip II’s wars in Europe.

Philip II’s Wars in Europe

In 1572, it is arguable that Protestantism was Felipe II’s biggest problem. That it had swept England was troubling enough, but worse than that, it was becoming a popular movement in the Netherlands, part of Felipe II’s Hapsburg empire. In 1568, Felipe II had to send a large army of some 70,000 troops to the Netherlands in order to put down the protestant rebellion of William, Prince of Orange. Although the rebellion was quelled, it would periodically flare up again, and Felipe had to maintain large garrisons there at enormous cost (Parker 124). In 1572, French Protestants also fighting under William of Orange invaded the Netherlands, although the Spanish again drove them back.

Protestant Britain was as much of a problem for Felipe II as the Netherlands. In 1571 he approved an ill-conceived plot to invade Britain and assassinate Queen Elizabeth. The plot failed, and Elizabeth learned of it. This incident, among many others, would eventually lead to the disastrous Spanish
Armada attack of 1588. The problem extended to the New World: Sir Francis Drake, the legendary British pirate, was the bane of Spanish shipping in the Atlantic and Pacific from about 1570 until his death in 1596. In Peru, Viceroy Toledo was forced to devise a convoy system to protect the gold while it was en route from Lima to Panama (Burkholder and Johnson 158).

Islam was on the move as well. “The Turks were on the offensive in the Mediterranean. Together with the Barbary pirates they raided European coasts with relative impunity and turned the eastern part of the Mediterranean into a Muslim lake” (Poole 102). In 1566, Turkish forces attacked and took the Aegean Island of Chios, and in 1570, they invaded Cyprus. The Moorish fleet was defeated by Catholic forces (mostly Italian) largely paid for by Felipe II at Lepanto in 1571. Although it was considered a great victory at the time, the Muslims were quick to regroup and go on the offensive again.

It is relevant to note that Muslims were still considered an implacable enemy by most of Spain. Although the Moors had been kicked out decades before, there was still a great deal of fear in the nation of Muslims in the Mediterranean and Northern Africa. As we shall see in Chapter Four, this fear of Islam led, in part, to serious speculation of North African origin for the New World natives.

Not all of Felipe II’s problems were with other religious groups. Catholic France was an occasional antagonist at this time, and Felipe II’s troops fought French ones on several occasions. In 1555, the French attacked, captured and sacked Havana, and even managed to occupy the port for a short period of
time. In 1565 French Huguenots attempted an incursion into what is today the Carolinas and Florida: they were repulsed by Pedro Menéndez de Avilés (Poole 102). In 1572, Felipe even had to hold his fleet in reserve long enough before committing it to the Netherlands to be assured that France would not declare war on him.

These wars were very costly, in terms of money, administration and manpower. There was no end in sight, either: Spain was involved in at least one armed conflict at any given time for most of Philip II’s reign. These wars – many of which were considered holy – could never have been fought without New World wealth and the credit that came with it.

Muslims and Jews

Meanwhile, back in Spain, Philip II had as many domestic problems as international ones. One problem was the continued (if somewhat imaginary) threat of Jews and Muslims to the security and religious purity of Spain. Although expelled from Spain in 1492, many Jews had chosen to convert in order to remain. Before long, however, it was apparent that not all of the conversions had been genuine, and that many of the Jews continued to practice Judaism in private. Philip II was also concerned with Jews who had gone to Portugal and later emigrated to the New World. Rooting out these crypto-Jews became the job of the Inquisition (installed in Lima in 1569) which relied on questionable methods to extract confessions. The Inquisition fostered an atmosphere of terror:
“...it had a divisive and depressant effect, spreading insecurity with its secretive procedures and vast web of informers, setting neighbors at loggerheads, and inducing an atmosphere of fear.” (Carr 133) Even suspicion of having Jewish blood was a serious issue: the Jesuit José de Acosta long struggled with rumors of his Jewish ancestry.

The converted Moors were not faring much better than their Jewish counterparts. In the 1520’s and 1530’s, the Inquisition began to pay more attention to the Moriscos, accusing them of heresy and backsliding. As the century progressed, their situation got even worse: in 1565, a church council in Granada questioned whether Morisco conversions had been authentic and restricted Moorish clothing. Two years later, Philip II banned many practices associated with Islamic culture, such as the use of Arabic language and certain clothing and eating customs.

That was not the worst of it, however: “In a more extreme move, the Crown decreed that Morisco children were to be taken away from their parents and brought up as Christians and Spaniards.” (Ruiz 106) These actions, in turn, led to the Morisco rebellion of 1568-1570: “Fifty years of blundering Spanish policy, which included harassment, persecution, forcible conversion, and treaty violations, left the crown with an embittered minority that had ethnic, cultural, and linguistic ties with the foe in North Africa. In 1568, the Moriscos of the Alpujarras rebelled and were not subdued for two years, offering to Europe the distressing spectacle of a king unable to control his own kingdom.” (Poole 102)
Therefore, even though Judaism and Islam had been kicked out of Spain decades before, they continued to be considered a problem and hatred and fear of Jews and Muslims was as high as it had ever been during Philip II’s rule. In addition, there was a great deal of resources being expended on “protecting” Spain from the “threats” of Jews and Moors, as funds that could have been used elsewhere went to the Inquisition or to costly wars to put down rebellions. Philip II felt that Spain’s “purity” was at stake, and did not want to compromise. The discursive construction of the native was thus realized in a society that saw itself besieged by agents of corruption on all sides. We will consider the question of Jews and Muslims a slightly more detail in the next chapter.

Philip II’s Money Problems

Philip II experienced financial woes during his entire tenure as king. Within a year of his coronation, Spain had declared bankruptcy (Burkholder and Johnson 85). All of the wars and conflicts were extremely expensive. Taxpayers were hit hard, and discontent grew. A 10% tax was levied in the Netherlands: the “tenth penny” tax was very unpopular (Parker 123). Troops mutinied or plundered villages when they weren’t paid on time, a common occurrence. The situation soon became critical: Felipe was forced to declare bankruptcy, although it did little to alleviate the problem: “…the debt remained. In 1565, on the eve of intervention in the Netherlands, it absorbed 84 per cent of Castilian revenue. By
the end of Philip’s reign, the total state debt was eight times higher than annual income.” (Carr 158)

This constant pressure on Felipe’s treasury made American gold and silver even more important. Not only was the New World a constant source of wealth, it was also a source of credit for the cash-strapped Empire:

Next to taxes, the silver mines of the New World were most important in royal finances. From the mid-1550’s until the 1620’s a huge increase in output was contrived and sustained, but its importance was essentially psychological: deceptively ‘unending’ new wealth encouraged the kings’ foreign creditors and helped make possible the dazzling ambition of royal projects in the reign of Philip II. (Carr 144)

New World wealth was crucial to Philip. Felipe II had plenty to deal with in Europe: the last thing he needed was any trouble coming from the New World. Although he may have felt for the plight of the natives, he could not afford any costly reforms at that moment: he needed every ounce of gold and silver that he could take from Mexico and Peru, and he could not afford any more bad publicity. Is it then a coincidence that in 1572, his agent, Viceroy Toledo, sent him a report from Peru concluding that Spain’s claim to the New World was legitimate?
Native Legal Rights and the Reformers

The reform movement, begun in the 1520’s and 1530’s by Las Casas, Vitoria and others, had gained a great deal of ground and by the time Philip II inherited his father’s empire and concern was growing in all sectors of Spanish society about the justness of the conquest and the legal status of the natives. It was an issue that divided the society. Although there had been some efforts to improve the situation of the New World natives, such as the New Laws of 1542, the abuses continued apace. Reports of massacres, mutilations, rapes and other such abuses reached Spain with every returning fleet. Many official, sanctioned practices were terribly abusive: the infamous repartimiento system was also established during this time, under which colonial administrators controlled all internal trade, forcing native workers to pay vastly inflated costs for goods and materials: the natives never were able to get out of debt (Burkholder and Johnson 87).

With the abuses as bad as ever, many of the pro-Indianists were becoming much bolder in their statements, beliefs, and assertions. Bartolomé de Las Casas (1474-1566), by then a very old man, became significantly more radical in his final years. He declared that the system of encomiendas and repartimientos was a mortal sin, and any who participated in the system was doomed to go to hell. He declared that each and every war and conquest carried out by the Spanish in the New World had been unjust and tyrannical, and that they had usurped every bit of land they owned. He even went so far as to say that as
far as the question of just war was concerned, the Spanish had not waged one: their premises for war and manner of carrying it out had been morally, legally and spiritually wrong. In fact, he believed, the natives had cause to wage a just war, not the Spanish (Poole 105).

Las Casas was not alone. There were many in Spain who harbored beliefs similar to his to a greater or lesser degree. The Franciscan Alonso Maldonado de Buendía, a devoted follower of Las Casas, continued much of his work after the elderly Dominican passed away. Maldonado believed, as many had before him, that the Spanish were not living up to their responsibilities of Christianization and education in the New World, as per the original grant. Therefore, the Spanish were in violation of the original papal decree granting them the New World. Unlike Las Casas, who constantly lobbied the Spanish crown for reform, Maldonado took his case to Rome, presenting church authorities with evidence of Spain’s failure to live up to their end of the bargain as originally defined in 1493.

Maldonado caused quite a stir at court. Several clerics and members of the Council of Indies stepped forward to defend Spain’s policies in the New World. Fray Diego de Chaves, who later became Phillip II’s confessor, declared Maldonado’s beliefs to be tantamount to treason, as declaring that Spain’s rule of the New World was based on usurpation would open the door for foreign powers to start taking away parts of the New World, and it also justified any revolt that had ever occurred in Spanish America (Poole 107). The “Black Legend,” an inadvertent side effect of the work of Las Casas, had been an international disaster
for Spain, and there were those who felt that Maldonado was making things worse: airing out Spain’s “dirty laundry” as it were.

The reformers had seized the moral high ground in the debate over native rights. A growing number of intellectuals, most of them religious, had successfully countered every attempt on the part of the colonials and the crown to prove that their conquest and occupation of the New World had been righteous. By 1565 or so they had proven that the Spanish invasion and decimation of the Indies had been wrong from every standpoint: moral, religious, legal and spiritual.

Legal arguments and philosophical questions of just war were not the only reasons that Spanish kings wished to occasionally overhaul the way things were in the Indies: there is also the question of conscience. There is evidence to suggest that Philip II wrestled with his conscience over the plight of the New World natives. As a prince, he had often been a voice in favor of reform at court: he had been involved in the creation of the New Laws of 1542. The historical record suggests that he may have personally been sympathetic to the cause of the natives.

Toledo reportedly asked the monarch on several occasions to allow the use of forced labor in the mercury mines of Peru, where no native would work willingly. Although the king balked at the idea, Toledo went ahead and established a system of forced labor anyway: “In 1572 he introduced the mita, a system of forced labor in shifts, a repeat of what the Indians had suffered under the Incas.” (Goodman 187). Although later Philip would react to some specific cases of abuse, he never called for the abolition of the system itself.
As a result of all of these questions – the newfound zeal of the reformers, the black legend, the royal conscience and concerns about the possibility that the church might revoke their grant of the New World to Spain – Philip II decided to undertake an overhaul of colonial policy. He had one of his most trusted ministers, Juan de Ovando, conduct a visita, or review, of the Council of Indies in 1567. Ovando found enough conflict of interest and ineptitude that a larger overhaul, known as the Junta Magna, was ordered in 1568. Las Casas, Maldonado, and other reformers had been asking for just such a council for years (Poole 129). Among the issues considered by this new council were the encomienda system and how much Indians could be forced to pay in tithes (Poole 131). Some members of the council were pro-Indianists, such as the bishop of Cuenca, who asserted that the only good reason for Spain being in the New World was to bring Christianity to the natives, and that other than that, they had no business there (Poole 132). Eventually, Viceroy Toledo would be given a set of instructions by the council, but there was no mention in them of limiting conquests or improving the living conditions of the Indians (Poole 134).

The New World natives neither gained nor lost much in the mid to late sixteenth century in terms of the construction of their legal and jurisprudential subjectivity. While legal minds such as Maldonado debated questions of native rights in Spain, colonial powers such as Toledo continued to enforce systems of repartimientos and corregimientos, through which they controlled native goods and labor. Needless to say, the natives were still denied any sort of voice regarding their own invention.
The reformers had more to say than ever, but the crown had been turning a deaf ear to calls for reform for decades. This time it would be different, however: between the new legal arguments promoted by the reformers, the international embarrassment of the black legend, and the continuing reports of horrors from the New World, the Catholic Church was threatening to get involved.

Rome and the New World

Many of the most important reformers were churchmen, and the church was growing concerned. Pope Alexander VI had granted the New World to Spain in 1493 with the condition that the natives be protected and brought to Christianity. By 1565, however, it was apparent that Spain was not living up to its duties under this grant. Conversions were less frequent than they should have been and were often carried out *en masse* to entire villages, which many in the church thought improper. Years of reports from missionaries and friars in the New World describing horrifying abuses, massacres and mayhem were beginning to take their toll, and in 1568 Pope Pius V established his own commission to look into the situation of the New World, specifically the missions and conversions of natives.

Although the papal commission never amounted to much in terms of improvements in the situation of the natives – it basically issued a soft warning to Phillip II to improve conversion rates and tactics – it proved to the Spanish crown
that perhaps their greatest claim to the Americas, the pope’s 1493 bull granting them sovereignty, was not something they could take for granted (Poole 112). There were only subtle hints in the report to remind the king that what Rome had given – in this case, the Indies – Rome could also take away. There were those on the commission who had wanted the report to be more forceful: “One anonymous member of the commission, however, said that if the king of Spain did not remove the obstacles to evangelization, he should be deprived of that kingdom” (Poole 114). The crown had a lot to lose: under the system of *patronato real*, or royal patronage, established early in the colonial system, the crown was responsible for religious education in the New World, and rewarded with significant taxes and tithes (Burkholder and Johnson 93).

Philip II was forced to respond to these doubts on the part of the church and at least, finally, make some sort of effort to appease Rome. He approved the establishment of the Inquisition in Lima, to help defend the faith against Protestants, Jews, and native idolatry. He also appointed Francisco de Toledo as Viceroy of Peru. Toledo was a proven administrator, and he carried copies of all of the various committee reports from the last few years when he departed for the New World in 1569. As we shall see, Toledo was able, through history, to help silence the reformers and critics.

As Spain reached a crucial point in its empire – the time period between 1565 and 1580 – there were still many unanswered questions about just war, the rights of the New World natives, and whether or not Spain had acted
appropriately in waging genocide on nations and peoples that had committed no offense. Las Casas might have been fading by then – he died in 1566 at the age of 92 – but he was replaced by other voices: less charismatic, perhaps, but there were more of them and they were every bit as dedicated to the cause of justice in the New World as he had been.

The legal delineation of the native’s subject position in European discourse that the Spanish had so painstakingly constructed was disintegrating in the face of these withering attacks. At the beginning of the century, the legal invention of the native was based on Spain having fought a just and fair war there, the native’s supposed predilection for natural slavery as it was understood by some scholars, a papal decree granting Spain sovereignty over the New World, and a series of legal arguments and precedents that could be interpreted in such a way as to reinforce Spanish rule.

By the 1560’s, however, many of these aspects of the legal invention of the New World native were gone or in jeopardy. The legal arguments that had supported just war and enslavement so easily in 1513 became a little bit murky when dealing with more organized societies such as the Aztecs and the Inca. The theory of natural slavery had been soundly discredited by Las Casas at the Valladolid debate in 1551 and it had faded from favor among the common population of Spain. Las Casas had turned the concept of just war upon its head, arguing that it was the Indians, not the Spanish, who were in a position to wage just war. Finally, Spain’s strongest support for its presence in the New World – the papal permission of 1493 – was being weakened by consistent abuses and
horrors being reported from the New World, and the church was threatening to rescind their support.

What emerged was a stalemate of sorts: on one hand, the money coming into Spain from the New World was crucial, and Philip II could not afford to lose it. On the other hand, the reformers had systematically destroyed every justification for conquest: there had been no just war, the natives were not subhuman, and Spain was not living up to its responsibility to protect and convert the natives. The reformers had been ignored for too long: the church was threatening to get involved. It seemed like a predicament that could not be solved.

In the end, the solution to Philip’s problems would be found in a new construction of native subjectivity. The initial inventions of the natives as brutes, sub-humans and sinners had sufficed as a justification for conquest, enslavement and exploitation for three generations. This initial construction of native subjectivity, however, would no longer work: the reformers had seen to that. What was needed was a new invention, one that called into question the innate capabilities of the native to accept Christianity and rule themselves. A new native subject had to emerge: one that reflected the work of the reformers, but still “needed” the Spanish. This new construction of native subjectivity could only be accomplished through the discourses of history and literature.
Literature During the Toledo Years

Many histories had been written before 1572, when the Toledans went on the offensive against the Inca. As popular as the histories of Zárate, Cieza de León and others were, none of them was considered definitive, and histories continued to be written in the New World by historians and conquistadores. The literature of the period from 1556 to 1581 is very important for the invention of the New World native through political history. It was in this time period that writers working for Viceroy Toledo began an organized campaign to prove that the natives of the New World had a long history of bad government, and therefore needed the Spanish to rule them.

Francisco de Toledo was Viceroy of Peru from 1569 to 1581. Coincidentally, he was sent to Peru immediately following two important instances in Spain: the visita, or review, of the Council of Indies undertaken by Philip II in 1567 and a papal commission review of the situation in the New World which took place in 1568. Both meetings produced sets of instructions for Toledo. The visita of the council of Indies called for some reforms, and the papal commission included instructions on proper Christianization of the natives (Poole 112).

Toledo understood that it was his job to silence the critics of the New World policy, one way or another. There was a great deal of wealth in the Andes, and it was one of his duties to ensure that it continued to flow into the coffers of Spain: “Toledo became convinced that the greatest service he could provide the
king was to remove all scruples from his/conscience so that they could
proceed to distribute wealth among his valuable Spanish subjects, place the
Indians under the iron rule of fear and obedience, and collect tribute and taxes”
(Castro-Klarén 154).

Toledo immediately set about accomplishing one of his goals: a defense
of the conquest. Toledo’s aim in creating the histories he supported was to justify
the conquest and answer doubts raised by Las Casas and others of like mind in the
previous decades. The method of his writers was to re-cast Andean history in
such a way that it constructed the Andean subject as incapable of self-rule, in
need of the salvation of Christianity, and as idle brutes who were undeserving of
reform. They also discredited Inca rule: although they felt there were many
positive aspects to it, and were impressed by the organization of the Incas, they
nevertheless dismissed the Incas as “tyrannical.”

In this section, I will consider three different sources, all of which were
texts sent from Peru to the King of Spain in early 1572. The first is a letter
composed by Alvaro Ruíz de Navamuel, Toledo’s personal scribe. The content of
this letter was presumably dictated by Toledo. The second source is a letter from
Toledo himself to the King. These letters, both of which were dated March 1,
1572, were included along with a packet of information that included the
informaciones, a set of interviews with Indians of Peru (specifically the elders)
seeking information about the Inca and their rule. The informaciones were
completed in 1572, and Toledo would base much of his invention of the Incas
upon them.
The third and most important text is Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa’s *Historia de Los Incas*, which reinforces all of the negative conclusions reached by Toledo in his letters to the King of Spain regarding the Andeans. The dedication is dated March 4, 1572. Presumably it was sent together with the informaciones and other letters to the king.

Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa was a colorful conquistador, writer, explorer, and soldier-of-fortune who had visited much of the New World by the time he joined Toledo’s administration in Peru in the 1570’s. He would go on to fame as the man who founded the city of Rey Don Felipe in the far south of Chile with three hundred settlers in 1584. The settlement was a disaster: within three years, all of the settlers would desert or perish, and the site came to be known as Puerto Hambre, or Port Famine.

Long before he founded Port Famine, however, he was a writer who took on Toledo’s challenge of creating a new invention of the New World native: “Toledo had asked Sarmiento de Gamboa to draw from the material being compiled in his *informaciones* a history of the Incas that would prove that they were not ‘natural lords’ of the Andes but rather usurpers and tyrants.” (Castro-Klarén 145)

Sarmiento de Gamboa’s strategy for justifying the continued Spanish presence in the New World was twofold. He needed to reinforce Spain’s claim to the New World based on the original papal concession of 1493: he had to prove that the New World natives could not govern themselves politically. In order to prove that they could not govern themselves politically, he attacked the pre-Inca
rulers of the Andes as well as the Inca themselves, inventing a history of the Andes in which the ruling Inca class brutally forced their rule on hapless small nations. The Incas of Toledo and his writers were cruel, unjust, wicked, and above all else, illegitimate rulers of Peru.

A close counter-colonial reading of the discourses perpetuated by the Toledans reveals that the artificial construction of a well-crafted history was the tool of choice for discrediting Inca rule in the Andes, which in turn facilitated a negative discursive invention/construction of the Indians and justified the Spanish exploitation of the New World. This section is a crucial one to my argument in this dissertation. Post-colonialism, in general, strives to identify and illuminate unequal structures of power and their effect on the hegemonic and subaltern classes that live within these structures. The Toledans were the first to exploit the definitive/inventive power inherent in the history of the New World natives and use it to construct a native subject. It was an important milestone in the history of New World repression: it was the birth of a new weapon, and it had as much of an effect as the introduction of the crossbow or cannon into a conflict where such a weapon had been previously unknown.

The Toledans’ Sources

Like the other writers before him, Sarmiento de Gamboa did not trust native record keeping. A disciple of Agustín de Zárate, he, too, disparaged native record-keeping even though it sometimes undermined his own arguments. Like
many of his contemporaries, Sarmiento de Gamboa ridiculed the natives in their beliefs and questioned their record-keeping ability, although he did include some of their legends. He described the memory systems of the natives, and in a kinder way than some: he referred to the Andean oral tradition as “very good and accurate” (Sarmiento de Gamboa 41) and called the quipus “admirable” (41). Nevertheless, these systems were still considered inferior to the European writing systems, and he often reminded his reader that he went to great pains to get the most reliable sources available.

When it comes to reporting the ancient history of the Andeans, however, the praise Sarmiento de Gamboa used for the memory systems quickly vanishes. He replaced it with unbridled derision, the tone of which is quite pervasive. Even the chapter titles pass a somber judgment on the Andeans and their history: the title of Chapter VI is “The fable of the origin of these barbarous Indians of Peru, according to their own blind opinions” (27). A later chapter is entitled “The road which these companies of the Incas took to the valley of Cuzco, and of the fables which are mixed with their history.” (47) And while Sarmiento de Gamboa did include some of these “fables,” it was only to ridicule them and hold them up to the Spanish as examples of the Devil’s work. The supposed victims of the Devil, they were portrayed as stupid, easily duped, sinning fools who never questioned why they did evil deeds.

I have identified many such contradictions in the works of Sarmiento de Gamboa and his contemporaries. They described the native record-keeping techniques as inaccurate and possibly even tainted by the Devil, yet they did not
have any alternative but to rely on them for what information they could give them. A skillful writer like Sarmiento de Gamboa was able to dance around the contradictions and pass off the information itself in true-sounding tones, yet at the same time assert the presence and influence of the Devil in the histories themselves.

Sarmiento had an interest in dismissing native memory and record-keeping: by maintaining the traditional Spanish exclusivity to the world of historical discourse, and by denying the natives their own voice in the matter, he preserved the “blank slate” of native history and was able to write his own history upon it without fear of contradiction. Although he used native sources, he was able to twist their words to his own ends, creating a sort of hybrid discourse which favored his own tradition.

The Pre-Inca

Now as in the colonial era, it is commonly accepted that Inca rule over parts of South America was a relatively recent phenomenon in the early sixteenth century when contact was made between the Spanish and the Inca. Cieza de León and Zarate had already established this in their works. Inca rule originated in the highlands near Lake Titicaca and spread with each successive generation. Many histories created by the writers in this study – notably Guaman Poma – list the Inca kings and the lands and towns that each of them added to Inca rule.
Because Inca rule over most of the Andes was a relatively recent phenomenon, the state of the Andean residents prior to the arrival of the Inca became an important consideration. The Toledans began their assault on the history of the New World by describing the life, culture and habits of the Andean people before they were subjugated into the Inca Empire. The picture that emerges of them, not surprisingly, is an unflattering one.

The Toledans built on the work of Zárate and Cieza de León, but they were much more negative than either of their predecessors. In Ruiz de Navamuel’s 1572 letter, we see what will become a recurrent theme in the works of the Toledans: the Americans who lived in the Andes before the arrival of the Incas were barbarians and brutes, with no sort of government or social cohesion whatsoever:

...hasta Topa Inga Yupanqui, que tuvo y sujetó tiránicamente estos reinos, los dichos naturales no tenían ni tuvieron ningun Señor ni cacique que les mandase ni gobernase en tiempo de paz, ni a quien tuviesen ninguna sujecion, y eran como behetrías, sin que hubiese entre ellos ningún género de gobierno, sino que cada uno gozaba de lo que tenía, y vivía como quería. (Ruiz de Navamuel 186)

Until Topa Inga Yupanqui, who took and subjected these lands, the aforementioned natives did not on any occasion have a lord or chief to order them or govern them in times of peace, nor were
they subject to anyone, and they were like free towns, without any sense of government, but rather each one took advantage of what they had, and everyone lived however they liked.

Ruiz de Navamuel here echoes Cieza de León and Zárate in his characterization of the pre-Inca as brutal and barbaric, but notice that he has added a negative judgment of the government of the pre-Inca where Cieza and Zárate did not mention it at all. This all proves, according to Ruiz de Navamuel, that the pre-Inca civilizations had no natural lord or government. These civilizations were unjustly attacked and subjugated by the Inca. The Toledans bolstered their claims of accuracy by including figures: Sarmiento de Gamboa claims that from the time of the flood to the beginning of Inca rule was 3,519 years (38).

The scribe then reports that in times of war, tribes would march into battle, and one warrior would step to the front of his side and the others would follow, and that man would be the leader for as long as the skirmish lasted. Sarmiento de Gamboa added that these men were called *sinchiuna*, which means “ahora valiente,” or “brave one right now” (Sarmiento de Gamboa 38). If another warrior distinguished himself on the field of battle, the people would abandon the first one and follow the new one. This man was a war-time leader only: he would not enjoy any special status after the battle was concluded.

The key, according to Ruiz de Navamuel, was to get the Andeans to work: the Incas were masters of getting the “holzaganes e ociosos” (196)
(“slothful and lazy”) natives to do their work. Therefore, the letter concludes, the Indians need someone to rule them:

Pruébase, questos naturales es gente que há menester curador para los negocios graves que se les ofrecen, ansí de sus almas como de sus haciendas, porque si no hobiese quien los guiase y gobernase en ellos, se perderían; y que si no hobiera españoles en esta tierra que los enseñaran en la fé de Jesuchristo, ellos no la entendieran y fueran engañados en todo, ansí en sus almas como en sus haciendas y buena órden y gobierno de sus personas, y que por esta causa eran muchas veces engañados. (Ruiz de Navamuel 197)

It is then proven that the natives are people who need a guide for the serious business that they undertake, so much for their souls as for their lands, because if there were nobody to guide them and govern them, they would be lost. And if there were no Spanish here to instruct them in the faith of Jesus Christ, they would not understand it and would be misled by all, in their souls and in their lands and in the good order of government and people, as they have often been misled in the past.

In this excerpt, note that Ruiz de Navamuel implies that the Spanish are the best thing that ever happened to the New World: this sort of discourse would
later become common all over the colonial world. It is an early version of the concept of ‘white man’s burden,’ or the idea that it is the duty of civilized Europeans to help out their less fortunate black and brown cousins. Said describes this attitude in *Orientalism*. Here, he discusses a British bureaucrat who had described Egypt in similar terms: “…he does speak for them in the sense that what they might have to say, were they to be asked and might they be able to answer, would somewhat uselessly confirm what is already evident: that they are a subject race, dominated by a race that known them and what is good for them better than they could possibly know themselves” (34-35).

This attitude is a keystone of colonialism: if the colonizers cannot at least superficially pretend to have the best interests of the colonized at heart, then what are they, other than invaders and parasites? The colonizer and colonized are always intricately linked: “The result is a mobile, conflictual fusion of power, fear and desire in the construction of subjectivity: a psychological dependence upon precisely those Others which are being rigorously opposed and excluded at the social level” (Stallybrass and White 5).

In his history *Historia de los Incas*, Sarmiento did not describe the pre-Inca for very long, devoting one mere chapter (VIII) to them, and not a very long one at that. Before the arrival of the Inca, the region had been home to little more than a number of disorganized groups. Sarmiento de Gamboa described them thus: “…although the land was peopled before the Incas, it had no regular government, nor did it have natural lords elected by common consent to govern and rule, and who were respected by the people...On the contrary all the people
were scattered and disorganised, living in complete liberty, and each man being sole lord of his house and estate.” (Sarmiento de Gamboa 37)

Sarmiento de Gamboa saw the pre-Inca as insignificant, although he did make one very interesting and ironic observation: in his transition from his description of the pre-Inca to his narrative of the history of the Inca, he takes an argument borrowed from the reformers and twists it to his own ends. He claimed that the people of these _behertrías_ were each the natural lords of their own regional nation, and that the Incas, as invaders, were therefore illegitimate tyrants: “I have explained how the people of these lands preserved their inheritances and lived on them in ancient times, ad that their proper and natural countries were known… from there we have to trace the origin of the tyranny of the Incas, who always had their chief seat in the valley of Cuzco.” (Sarmiento de Gamboa, 39). This is an ironic twist on the argument put forth by Las Casas and others that the New World natives were the natural lords of the Americas; Sarmiento agreed, but claimed that _only_ the pre-Inca were the legitimate lords: their rights had been usurped by the Inca.

The Incas, he argues, did not have the right to subjugate them, and the Spanish were doing nothing less than righting an ancient wrong when they, in turn, removed the Inca. The Incas had waged an unjust war, and the Spanish had been right to remove them. As far as the Spanish were concerned, in this case two wrongs did make a right.

Why were the pre-Inca so important to the Toledans? And why were they characterized so negatively? The answers are linked. The Toledans needed
to discredit the Inca ruling class, in order to justify the \textit{fait accompli} of having
removed them from power. In the absence of Inca rule, however, it was easy for
the Toledans to imagine those opposed to the conquest arguing that once the Inca
were removed, the Andeans could go back to living life as they had before, which
would cause a different set of problems for those who defended the conquest.

Therefore, the pre-Inca “needed” to be described as completely unfit for
self rule, either administratively or spiritually. This strategy of anticipating their
opponents’ argument seemed to work; I have found scant evidence of opponents
of the conquest arguing that the Andes should be allowed to return to self-rule.
One such voice is, of course, Guaman Poma, who in 1615 argued that pre-Inca
rule in the Andes was not what the Toledans had made it out to be and that the
Spanish colonial enterprise could continue under native rule\textsuperscript{19}. I will elaborate
on that and other arguments relating to Guaman Poma in Chapter Five. For now,
I will proceed to how the Toledans portrayed the ruling Inca class.

The Toledans and the Inca

Once the pre-Inca had been described as barbaric and incapable of self-
rule, the Toledans turned their attention to the Inca themselves. Discrediting the
Inca was far more important than discrediting those who had ruled in the region
before their arrival. The destruction of the Inca Empire was, perhaps, the most

\textsuperscript{19} Another exception was the famous mestizo El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, who was Spanish on his
father’s side and Inca on his mother’s side. He went to Spain as a young man and wrote detailed histories
of the New World which became quite popular. Like Guaman Poma, Garcilaso also offered alternative
ruling paradigms in the New World. I have not included Garcilaso in this study for the sake of brevity.
egregious example of unchecked power and unmitigated greed in the New World on the part of the Spanish and there were many questions being raised about the legitimacy of the conquest there. In 1572, the Inca were still the one ruling class left in the New World with the most convincing claim to reparations or restitution of some sort. If these claims were not convincingly refuted, Spain could be forced to enact some costly reforms.

Therefore, the Toledans began an all-out assault on the Inca Empire, condemning its leaders, history, laws and actions. In this, the Toledans are in marked contrast to Cieza de León (with whose works they were certainly familiar), who had admired the Inca. Even Zarate, who did not like the Inca, had never suggested that they were not the legitimate lords of Peru in any legal or moral sense. The stated purpose of the Toledans was to de-legitimize the Incas, giving support to the Spanish colonial enterprise. They began with the mythic origins of the Inca.

Sarmiento de Gamboa took the Inca legend of four brothers and four sisters who were the legendary forefathers of the Inca tribe near Cuzco, and re-wrote it to make the eight seem evil, manipulative and violent (45). The eight siblings knew that the other Indians in the Andes were naive, ignorant, and fearful, and decided to conquer the regions in turn; some with violence, others with persuasion and deceit. To this end, they created “fabulas” (“fables”) of their divine origin, claiming to be sons and daughters of Wira Cocha20 in order to trick the other Indians. Those who could not be tricked were defeated in battle. (51)

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20 Wira Cocha was the first and strongest god in the Inca pantheon.
The leaders were Manco Capac, the eldest brother, and Mama Huaco his sister/wife. The two are described as “cruel, ferocious, and atrocious.” (52). Later, he affirms that they incestuously had children together.

Sarmiento de Gamboa described the process by which the eight brothers and sisters conquered the Andes in vivid detail. They employed harsh strategies, such as capturing water supplies to force surrender. The reactions of the other Indians to this conquest are even included: one chief fled his home when it was clear that the Incas were going to defeat his forces and the Alcabisas, one of the cultures subjugated by these Inca, had already given the Inca some lands to appease them. It was not enough, and in the resulting invasion they declared them to be monsters:

He (Manco Ccapac) took the lands without distinction, to support his companies. As he had taken those of the Huallas and Sauaseras, he wished also to take those of the Alcabisas. As these Alcabisas had given up some, Manco Ccapac wished and intended to take all or nearly all. When the Alcabisas saw that the newcomers even entered their houses, they said: “These are men who are bellicose and unreasonable! They take our lands!” (Sarmiento de Gamboa 59)

The Alcabisas, like the rest of those who stood against the Inca, were eventually defeated and became subjects to their “tyrannical” rule. Sarmiento de
Gamboa’s inclusion of a direct quote in this section is very interesting: was it a quote directly taken from one of his native sources, or did he make it up to put a human face on the suffering wrought by the ‘unjust’ Inca? Sarmiento did not clarify, but the quote made one thing clear: he was implying that it is not the Spanish who passed judgment on the tyranny of the Inca, but rather the Indians they violently conquered.

Once he has described the bloody birth of the Inca Empire, founded on lies and violence, Sarmiento de Gamboa launched into his own biographies of the Inca kings, a section which was de rigeur in histories of the time. His dates, as usual, are quite specific: for example, the second Inca, Sinchi Rocca, died in 675 A.D. (63)21. The biographies occasionally refer to the Incas as ‘tyrannical’ but offer little supporting evidence. Sarmiento’s history gives many details of Inca life right down to the time of Huascar and Atahuallpa. He focused more on Atahuallpa, who by then had become a figure quite reviled by the Spanish.

Sarmiento de Gamboa described Atahuallpa’s deeds in gory detail. At one point, he had captured Huascar and some of his women, many of whom were pregnant or had small children. To spite his brother, Atahuallpa ordered the women hung from stakes on the side of a highway, and their children hanged with them. The pregnant ones first had their unborn babies ripped out. Any of Huascar’s allies who were captured met a similar fate (184-185). Huascar himself was forced to watch.

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21 Comparing this to Guaman Poma’s biographies of the Inca kings, we find an interesting discrepancy: according to Guaman Poma, Sinchi Roca was the Inca not only at the moment of Christ’s birth but also when he died.
When the Spanish came, they quickly captured Atahuallpa. According to Sarmiento de Gamboa, the Spanish, once they had Atahuallpa, asked to see Huascar, as it was their understanding that he was the elder brother, and thus the legitimate ruler of the land. Atahuallpa, concerned that the Spanish would somehow free his brother and place him on the throne in Cuzco, ordered him brought to see the Spanish as they had asked – but gave secret orders to have Huascar cut up into pieces and thrown in a river en route. His other remaining brothers were likewise slain.

It was for this, according to Sarmiento de Gamboa, that Pizarro ordered his death: “For this murder of Huascar and for other good and sufficient causes, the Governor Don Francisco Pizarro afterwards put Atahualpa to death. He was a tyrant against the natives of this country and against his brother Huascar. He had lived 36 years. He was not Inca of Peru, but a tyrant” (Sarmiento de Gamboa, 189-190). Here, in one short section, Sarmiento de Gamboa de-legitimizes Inca rule by declaring Atahuallpa a murderer and a tyrant, and also seems to imply that the people of Peru deserve better lordship.

Sarmiento de Gamboa included a significant conclusion to his work in which he basically summarizes everything he has written in his work and reiterated his main points. He rehashed the Incas’ cruel subjugation of the Indians of the Andes, and reminded the reader that these same Indians took up arms against the Inca every chance they could. Every Inca, from Manco Capac to Atahuallpa, was guilty of some sort of heinous crime against the people of the Andes. Any claims of any remaining descendants of the Inca were therefore
“false and without reason” (192). He mentioned the few surviving Inca who are of the blood line, and dismisses each of their claims.

Sarmiento de Gamboa thus defined the Inca in highly negative terms, bolstering Spain’s claim to rule in the New World. The Toledans were so successful in creating this negative image of Inca rule that later historians would accept it without much question. Thus, long after the time of crisis had passed, the negativity associated with the pre-Inca and the Inca would remain.

The last item of interest from the 1572 packet of information from Peru to Spain was a letter from Toledo himself to Philip II. Toledo addressed himself directly to the king, and begins by saying that the king has been poorly treated by those who doubt his right to the Indies. He claims that the informaciones reveal five main points: First, that the King is the “legítimo Señor” of the New World, and that the Incas and local curacas (the ones who remain) are “intrusos” (“intruders”) who are not legitimate rulers. Second: as just ruler, the king has the power to do whatever he wants in the Indies concerning the Indians and their government. In fact, it is the king’s duty to be active, because if he is not, the native chiefs and leaders will do it for him. Third: Since the New World belongs to the king to do with as he sees fit, he is within his rights to pass out land and villages at will to loyal Spanish subjects. Any vestige of the Inca system should not be considered, as the Incas were illegitimate. Fourth: everything in the New World that once belonged to the Incas or their idols now belongs to the king. Fifth: as legitimate ruler, it is the king’s duty to see to the education and defense of the Indians. As they are somewhat intellectually limited, it may be necessary
to create and enact many laws concerning their well-being, and it is important to do so, even if they are deprived of their liberty in the process.

Toledo ended his letter by expressing the hope that the enclosed informaciones and reports will silence the critics of the conquest, as their constant badgering has only interfered with the installation of a proper administration in the New World. Toledo thus plainly spelled out his agenda: he intended to ease the king’s conscience, thus facilitating the passing out of favors to Spanish in the New World. In today’s political speak, we would call it “spin.” Toledo may have succeeded: history tells us that the New World natives suffered for centuries under Spanish rule. Today we can only wonder at what lingering effects this invention may have had.

The Toledans and Origins

In this study, the Toledans are primarily included for their contribution to New World history in terms of political history. However, the Toledans did have some thoughts on the possible origins of the New World natives as well. The Toledans missed an opportunity in their quest to discredit Inca rule by not seizing upon the question of origins as a means to define native character through ethno-historical association.

Sarmiento de Gamboa was a believer in the Atlantis theory, of which Zárate had been a fervent and popular proponent. In his History of the Incas, he went into much more detail than Zárate had almost twenty years earlier. Zárate
was content to report that Atlantis was larger than Asia and Africa combined, but Sarmiento de Gamboa was far more specific: in his opinion, Atlantis had stretched from Gibraltar to the Indies (Sarmiento de Gamboa 16).

He also expanded on the Atlantis theory in terms of the men and women who lived there. He had some difficulty figuring out which son or sons of Noah were responsible for populating the New World, as they were all sent to known places such as Africa and Asia. His numbers are very specific: he claims that it was exactly 1,656 years from the time of Adam until the great flood and that 310 years after the flood, the population of the world had reached 300,000 (21). He eventually decides that the inhabitants of the New World might have even been descended from Spaniards (21), but also from Atlas, the giant, who was Noah’s grandson.

Sarmiento de Gamboa also mentioned the possibility of Greeks in the New World. Ulysses might have made it that far in his travels and the dress of natives in Campeche and Yucatan make those likely landing places: “For those of that land have the Grecian bearing and dress of the nation of Ulysses, they have many words and Grecian letters. Of this I have myself seen many signs and proofs.” (Sarmiento de Gamboa 26). The men of Catígara were probably descended from Jews and the Incas of Peru were descended from Atlanteans (27). He did not dwell on cultural aspects of any of these people that might support or refute his arguments. As for Atlantis itself, Sarmiento de Gamboa deduced that it was sunk due to one or more of five great biblical floods that occurred after the great flood (26).
Although he mentioned that Jews or Africans might be among those who populated Atlantis, and subsequently the New World, he did not spend much effort on those theories, preferring to write only the most perfunctory piece on their ancient origins, and he did not draw any sort of other conclusion from their supposed ancient ancestry. This is most interesting by its absence: Sarmiento de Gamboa, seeking to thoroughly discredit the Inca as rulers, should have seized upon the idea that the Incas were, themselves, modern descendants of an ancient “degenerate” race, as later writers would.

I find it quite relevant that it did not occur to Sarmiento de Gamboa to look closely at the question of the Old World origins of the New World natives. Everything is in place for him to do so: he affirms what all Spanish historians at the time affirmed, that the men of the New World were descended from Noah, and he puts forth a plausible theory of their arrival in the New World via Atlantis. But in doing this, he only mimicked what other scholars did, although his Atlantis section greatly expanded on the arguments of Zárate, his likely source. By failing to include cultural comparisons, Sarmiento does not engage in true ethno-historical association.

It is important to remember Sarmiento de Gamboa’s goals: it was his intention to de-legitimize native rule in the Andes in the past in order to de-legitimize it in the present and future. Had it occurred to Sarmiento de Gamboa to claim that the Incas were descended from Jews or Moors, he would have solved one of his greatest “problems”: how to de-legitimize native rule in such a way that it was founded on “reliable” documentation. Future writers did just that: the fact
that Sarmiento de Gamboa failed to do so proves that this line of argument had not yet been developed. I therefore deduce that this use of this origins debate to legitimize the conquest must therefore have come later. This is related to one of my central arguments in this dissertation: the fact that Sarmiento de Gamboa and his blatant apology for the conquest did not use origins to de-legitimize the Inca and their period of rule implies that it probably did not occur to him to do so.

Chapter Three Conclusion

By about 1565 or so, Philip II was in a tight spot when it came to the New World. He desperately needed the wealth his New World colonies provided, and those colonies, in turn, relied on native slave labor for production. Any interruption in the flow of money from the New World to Spain would seriously impair his ability to conduct his wars against the Turks, France, Britain, and rebels in the Netherlands. These wars were considered vital to the security of Spain, and were, in fact, even considered “holy” in some cases: God Himself needed Spain to defeat the unfaithful.

But he could no longer ignore the strident voices of Bartolomé de Las Casas and the other reformers. The initial conquest, sack, and occupation of the New World had been based upon certain assumptions about the New World native. It had been assumed that a “just war” could be waged in the New World if the natives refused to submit to Spanish rule. It had also been suggested that he natives were not exactly human, and therefore did not have the same rights as
Europeans. Finally, the papal grant of 1493 supported Spain’s rights to the New
World: after all, the pope spoke for God, and there was no higher authority.

Those discursive constructions/inventions had all been debunked by Las
Casas and the other reformers, however. It had been proven that Spain had not
waged a just war by any definition. It had been proven that the natives were not
natural slaves or any other lower form of life that God wanted protected. Legal
discursive subjugations of the natives as Spanish subaltern subjects broke down
when reformers with keen legal minds examined the case: Spain had a right to the
Indies, they concluded, but not necessarily to the bodies and work of the natives.
These inventions had worked once, but no more: the King of Spain needed a new
invention of the New World native, one that would permit the continued
exploitation of New World wealth.

Spain had a long history of ignoring the reformers, however, and might
have simply tuned them out yet again except for the fact that the church was
threatening to get involved, on the grounds that Spain was not living up to their
end of the bargain according to the original grant. The result was a stalemate
between the reformers, the colonists, and Philip II’s needs. This stalemate was a
very difficult one. The reformers were right, but Philip II needed the money. If
he did something drastic, he might lose the colonies, but if he did nothing, he
might lose the support of the church.

There was no solution to this riddle, or so it seemed. What was needed
was a return to the drawing board of invention, as it were. Previously,
constructions of the native subject had served the Spanish crown as a way to
justify the conquest. In 1569, Viceroy Francisco de Toledo – who had copies of
the reports on the council of Indies undertaken by Juan de Ovando and the
church’s review on the Indies – went to Peru to assume his duties. Within three
years, he and writers in his employ provided the king with the new definition of
native subjectivity that he needed. According to the Toledans, the pre-Incas were
nothing more than a collection of brutal tribes, even though they were legitimate
lords of their lands. The Inca were just the opposite: better rulers, but their
conquest of the region had been unjust, and their rule tyrannical. Because of this,
they were no better rulers than those who had been in the region before them.

The Toledans thus twisted the history debate into a justification of the
conquest based on native character as they defined it. They wrote about the
horrors endured by the bestial pre-Inca and the brutal Inca conquest. They added
to the mixture vivid descriptions of Incas dealing with the devil, sorcerers, incest,
rape and murder. Throughout, they crafted their histories to fit their own clearly
stated purpose – to discredit Inca rule and justify the conquest of America by the
Spanish, putting an end once and for all to the questions raised by reformers such
as Las Casas and Vitoria.

Thus the argument of the Toledans can be summarized as follows:
abuses or not, the Spanish were still better administrators than the natives
themselves would be. The greatest unfairness would be to leave the natives alone,
because even though Spanish administration was not perfect, it was still the best
available to the natives.
This new invention – of the natives as poor administrators – apparently worked. The church stopped threatening to revoke their charter, and the voices of the reformers calmed a bit. Perhaps the common Spaniards found comfort in the notion that they were “helping” the natives rule themselves as well. They could accept that Spanish rule was not perfect, if the alternative were even worse for the “poor natives.”

But what happened after? Philip II’s financial crisis continued, and New World wealth continued to help pay it off. The voices of the reformers, more silent since the passing of Las Casas in 1566, did not answer the Toledans. The Jesuit José de Acosta, who was in Peru during Toledo’s years, did not contradict any of the Toledan conclusions in his works (even though he was much more pro-Indian than they were). Martín de Murúa, a Franciscan priest who wrote his own history of the Andes around 1610 and who was well known to Guaman Poma, echoed all of the Toledan claims in his own manuscript, passed around Peru in the early seventeenth century (it was published much later).

In other words, the slander and racism that the Toledans attached to the history of the Americans long outlived the crisis that had necessitated it. The New World natives were portrayed as incapable of sound self-rule, because they had never been capable of such a thing, and therefore never would be.

The history of the New World would never be the same. The natives would forever be stuck with the racist belief that they could not govern themselves. Although the reasons were lost in time, the stereotype remains today.
CHAPTER 4: ACOSTA AND GARCIA, 1590-1607

It is not very important to know what the Indians themselves are wont to tell of their beginnings and origin, for what they relate resembles dreams rather than history…When I made efforts to learn of them from what lands and people they had come to the place where they live, I found that, so far from being able to do so, they were instead certain that they had been created from the very beginnings in this New World where they dwell. We opened their eyes with our faith, which teaches that all men come from one man.22

-José de Acosta, 1590

Where did the New World natives originally come from? When and where did they branch off of the Christian family tree established by Adam and Eve and continued through Noah? How did they get to the New World from wherever they were before? Acosta was neither the first nor the only one to

22 Acosta, 72-73
become frustrated in his quest to determine the Old World origins of the New World natives.

Like Acosta, most Europeans in the sixteenth century took the Bible as literal truth, believing that all men were descended from Adam and that therefore all human lineages could be traced back to one single point (or two, if you consider Noah and the Great Flood). The Indians of the New World were therefore a missing branch on the human family tree. Determining where the Indians had come from – which Old World culture had produced them – was a puzzle that many colonial writers tried to solve. These questions had plagued historians of the New World since 1521, when the return to Europe of the Magellan expedition proved, conclusively, that the Americas were, in fact, not part of Asia. As the sixteenth century came to a close, the question of origins was as hotly debated as ever.

As the sixteenth century gave way to the seventeenth, two Spanish writers who had traveled extensively in the New World gave serious consideration to this very question in their written works: The Jesuit, José de Acosta, and the Dominican, Gregorio García. In this section, I will focus on these two writers. The two works I consider in this section are Acosta’s Natural and Moral history of the Indies, first printed in 1590, and García’s Origen de los Indios de el Nuevo Mundo e Indias Occidentales, printed for the first time in 1607. The books and their writers share some common traits, but also some significant differences.
In selecting these two writers, I echo Lee Huddleston, who divided origin theories into what he termed the ‘Acostan’ and ‘Garcían’ traditions. Huddleston’s work is priceless for any student of origin literature, as he has done a great deal of work in tracking down every theory. His work, while very useful, lacks analysis of underlying reasons for the different theories, but he did his work almost fifty years ago and did not approach his project from a post-colonial perspective.

García and Acosta are representative of writers from their era. Both men referred to contemporaries discussing the same theories they put forth in their treatises. García, for example, decided (92) to cut his section on native idolatry short on the grounds that others, among them Acosta, had already written extensively on the subject. In my opinion, this is ample proof that the question of idolatry among the Indians was one that was discussed frequently in García’s circles, and also indicates the probability that some connection between the Jews and the Indians was under public consideration as well.

José de Acosta was one of the leading intellectuals of his day. His works were well-known and well regarded. He spent a great deal of time in the New World, and although he was reportedly very overweight, he managed to accompany Viceroy Francisco de Toledo on some of his visits to parts of Peru in the 1570’s. Acosta had a keen interest in “the big picture,” as it were, the divine plan for the human race and Spain’s (no doubt prominent) place in it. Because he felt that this plan was something tangible or quantifiable, he also felt that this plan was something that could be discovered, or at least intuited. His work reflected
this thought: it is a mystical exploration of God and the Devil in the New World, and a personal search for the meaning of everything. History and origins were part of the overall scheme of things: for that reason, they are included in his work as points of interest, but there is much, much more information and speculation not limited to history and origins. His work has persevered: the most recent edition was published by Duke University in 2002, with a very useful introduction by Walter Mignolo.

García, on the other hand, has been forgotten by history. *Origen de los Indios*, most recently published in 1729, is today very hard to find, and few colonialists have worked with it extensively. In spite of this, the work is a treasure trove of information, insights and opinions.

García devoted the entire book to a logical examination and evaluation of each and every origin theory that had been yet proposed, with pros and cons regarding each one. García visited the New World in the waning years of the sixteenth century, where he spent nine years in Peru, followed by an indeterminate (but probably fairly short) period in New Spain. He became intrigued by the question of the origin of the Americans and his 1607 *Origen de los Indios de el Nuevo Mundo e Indias Occidentales* was meant to be one book out of a series of three.

García’s treatise is of particular use, as it is quite well organized. García divided his treatise into five different books. The first book describes his

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23 Today, García is probably best known as the writer who provided the clues necessary to effect a partial translation of the *Códice Vindobonense*, one of a mere handful of Mexican pre-conquest picture books still in existence today. This codex had baffled all attempts to decipher it until it was realized that it told the same story as the one written down by García in book five of his treatise.
principles and foundations, and then proceeds to discuss the various ways in which humans might have gotten to the New World. The second book discusses the theory that the Native Americans are descended from Carthaginians. The third book discusses the opinion that the Native Americans are descended from one or more of the ten lost tribes of Israel. The fourth book describes first the possibility that the natives are descended from Ophirians, and then lists a number of other theories, such as that they are descended from the French, Swedes, English, etc. The fourth book ends with García listing his own personal opinion of the ancestry of the natives. The fifth book, interestingly, details several different tales of origin from the New World natives themselves.

In this chapter, I will examine the writings of both men in regards to the question of origins. Both searched the ancients thoroughly looking for answers, and, finding little, discussed the leading theories of the day. The first part of this chapter is divided up into smaller segments in which I consider their search of the ancients and then their conclusions about some of the leading theories, including the Atlantis, Israel, and Carthage theories. I will show that these writers – García in particular – were heavily biased toward more ‘negative’ theories such as the Israelite or Carthaginian theories.

In the second half of this chapter, I will answer the question of why these writers evidently preferred negative theories to more positive ones. I believe that they did so for three reasons: first of all, to help support the continued evangelization of the New World, second, in a misguided but earnest attempt to help the natives deal with their own idolatry, and third, to place the natives into an
existing subaltern class, thus limiting their role in Spanish society. Concerning
the process of the “invention” of the Native American subject that I have analyzed
in the previous chapters, these authors were an important part of it. They took a
different tack, however: previous writers, such as Sarmiento de Gamboa,
constructed native subjectivity through worldly factors, such as political history.
Acosta and García, on the other hand, were more concerned with the spiritual
native subject.

But I am getting ahead of myself. Let us begin with Acosta’s and
García’s search of ancient writers for answers.

Searching the Ancients

By the mid-century period, historians were no longer looking for
answers in Marco Polo and the popular encyclopedias of the late fifteenth century.
They still were searching the writings of the ancients, however, for some sort of
proof that they had known about the New World. By the time Acosta finished
his work in 1590, some of his contemporaries had given up on the ancients.
Acosta did not; he was a believer in a deeply rooted divine plan for Spain and the
world, and he searched his ancient sources for any clues that could help him
understand it. As for the New World, Acosta felt that the ancients might have
some of the pieces of the puzzle he was looking for.

Even though Acosta might have taken the ancients very seriously and
searched diligently for clues to divine will in their writings, he found very little
there that he considered convincing. Furthermore, he was aware that he was often
going to include data in his work that would directly contradict what the ancients
wrote. The very first sentence of Book One of his treatise makes it plain that
Acosta, while respectful of the ancients, is going to correct many of their works:
“The ancients were so far from thinking that this New World was peopled that
many of them refused to believe that there was land in these regions; and, what is
more surprising, there were even some who also denied that these heavens that we
behold exist here.” (13) He later excused the ancients, stating that “they did not
pay great heed to the sciences and demonstrations of philosophy, being engaged
in more important studies.” (15) Acosta thus shows that while the first steps were
being taken towards abandoning the ancients where matters of the New World
were concerned, full realization on the part of Europe that their old sources had
held no concept of the Americas was still a long way away.

Much of the early section of his work is devoted to deep philosophical
issues (such as whether or not the heavens appear above all places in the world)
but eventually Acosta comes around to the question of whether the ancients had
any knowledge of the New World. He alluded to the origin debate, stating that
“many persons ask out of curiosity whether, in ancient times, there was any
knowledge of this truth (presence of people in the New World, and between the
tropics), which is so apparent to us nowadays” (Acosta 39, parentheses mine).

Acosta made it clear that he finds few traces of such knowledge and that
he disagreed with those who claim that the information is decisive: “There are
some, however, perhaps trying to tarnish the good fortune of our time and dim the
glory of our nation, who try to demonstrate that this New World was known by the ancients, and indeed it cannot be denied that there are some traces of this.” (40)

In keeping with his beliefs about a divine plan, Acosta decides the best evidence came from a prophetic verse in Seneca’s *Tragedy of Medea*, in which phrases such as “a large land will be espied” and “our broad ocean will surpass its limits” seem to foretell the discovery of the New World (41). As to how Seneca knew, Acosta wrote: “If I were to offer my opinion, I believe that he divined it with the kind of divination practiced by wise and perceptive men. (40)” In other words, Seneca had seen some of the pieces of the divine puzzle that Acosta was trying to put together, not because God illuminated him, but because he was “wise and perceptive,” adjectives that perhaps Acosta would like to apply to himself in his own quest for divine truth.

As for scriptural evidence, Acosta seemed surprisingly indifferent. He felt that other writers had already been over the scripture in search of clues to knowledge of the New World that it was not worth his time to do so: “Many learned authors, to whom I defer, understand that whole chapter (Isaiah) to be about the Indies.” (50).

All in all, Acosta wavered on the question of ancient knowledge of the New World. He presented the contents of the debate as it was at his time, and even reminds us that “many persons” have raised the questions he attempts to answer. Seemingly unconvinced either way, Acosta did not offer an opinion of his own, preferring to let the New World stand as an enigma. It is important to
note that none of the evidence examined in this section has anything to do with the character or nature of the New World natives themselves. Later, we will return to Acosta’s opinions about any comparisons between Old and New World cultures.

García, an admirer of Acosta writing less than 20 years later, also searched the ancients and Holy Scripture for any mention of the New World. He mentions searching through the works of Plato, Aristotle, Seneca, Plutarch, Lucian and others. He found little evidence in their works that they had any idea of new lands to the west, but did not allow that to dampen his enthusiasm. He seemed content to stretch the words of the ancients in order to give them the benefit of the doubt. For example, when Aristotle postulated the existence of an island on the other side of the Pillars of Hercules, (Gibraltar) García credited him with knowledge of Hispaniola.

He then turned to Holy Scripture, which he found repeated mentions of the New World, although he only cited a few vague references. Referring to a section of the book of Isaiah, he claimed that the bible foresaw the amazement and incredulity of the New World natives when they saw the sails of Columbus’ ships, which looked like clouds. Another quote, this one from the book of Songs, asks what is to be done with a sister, and it is to be understood metaphorically that the (underdeveloped) sister represents the New World. He also returned to the book of Isaiah for the quote about the lost tribes of Israel being scattered around the world. The bible mentions Italy, Africa, and Greece, among others as their
possible destinations, but García assumes the Jews made their way to the New World as well (31).

It is interesting to note that more than one hundred years after Columbus, writers were still searching in the ancients for any sort of clue that they had some knowledge of the new World. Even though they searched diligently, they found very little, and were forced to rely on other sources, including native texts and beliefs.

Acosta, García and History

In the northern part of the Spanish New World Empire, Mexican cultures had codices, accordion-folding texts that seemed closer to books than anything else the Spanish encountered in the New World. Because of differences, however, these texts soon came to be viewed with great suspicion: it was believed that only European-style books could contain truth: “Venegas’ dual typology, distinguishing between the archetype and the metagraph book, allowed an interpretation of the latter that emerged in almost every report about writing and books in the New World: it might be the book of the devil, which contained not science but superstition, not truth but falsehood” (Mignolo 1998 75). In other words, Mexican amoztli (as these texts were known) were not true books (which were the only appropriate receptacles of history) – they were anti-books, tools of the devil. It is for this reason that unknown numbers of these texts were burned by zealous Spanish priests.
When all of the possibilities offered by native history had been exhausted, what remained was the fact that the Spanish either did not accept – or did not want to accept – any native traditions and beliefs. The Spanish reserved the right to know what was best for the natives. Their biases were also partly to blame, as was the very alien-ness of the native records. In any event, the discrepancies between their own, book-based, Catholic history and the native codex and oral-based, traditional history were great enough that the Spanish were able to dismiss native history as inaccurate. This created what I call a ‘historical gap,’ or a blank page of history, onto which the Spanish could write whatever they wished. It was, in a word, an opportunity.

By the latter half of the sixteenth century, it had been “decided” by the Spanish historians that the native histories were, at best, somewhat accurate for the previous four hundred years at the most. Earlier historians, such as Zárate and Cieza de León, had grudgingly used them, but the native histories had never been fully accepted by the Spanish. Even the generous Jesuit José de Acosta, writing in the 1580’s and in so many ways sympathetic to the cause of the natives, agreed with the sentiment:

But of what use is it to add more, since all of it is full of lies and goes against reason? What learned men affirm and write is that the entire memory and tradition of these Indians is about four hundred years and everything previous to that is pure confusion and shadows, with no possibility of discovering anything certain. (73)
Acosta was an admiring of the quipu and other native record-keeping techniques, even if he considered them to be lesser forms of memory. Seeking to have it both ways, Acosta eventually decided to create a division between types of history, as Walter Mignolo points out: “The complicity between alphabetical writing and history, applied to Amerindian cultures, elicited Acosta’s typology of writing. He concluded that anybody can keep records of the past, but history can only be written with letters” (Mignolo 1998 134).

García agreed, and attempted to fit the New World into an existing historical paradigm, the bible. He felt that the New World natives had lost all of their knowledge about scripture, origins and the real history of the world and that Satan was to blame:

Así, pues, los Indios tuvieron noticia de la Creación del Mundo, del Diluvio General, i de Noé, i sus Hijos, i como perdieron esta noticias, que les servía de luz, i de hacha, para conocer, i ver con los ojos del entendimiento algunas verdades, quedaron llenos de tinieblas de ignorancia, i como la obscuridad, i noche incita, i mueve a sueño, fue en ellos tan profundo, que de lo que antes havian sabido, i oído, soñaban, i componian mil Fabulas, mentiras, i disparates, siendo el Artífice, i Maestro de ellas, el que lo es de mentiras, Satanás. (García 318)
Therefore, the natives once knew of Creation, the Great Flood, and of Noah and his children. This knowledge was a light and a guide for them, and they saw with wise eyes many truths. But then, they were clouded with the fog of ignorance and plunged into darkness. Darkness and night make for dreams, and they dreamed so deeply that they turned what they once had known into a collection of fables, lies and nonsense. The cause of this was Satan, master of lies.

For García to proceed using knowledge gathered from his native sources was therefore, in his estimation, worse than useless: not only was the knowledge of the New World natives incorrect “dreams” of past knowledge, it had been deliberately tampered with by Satan himself. This made the knowledge not only useless but dangerous as well.

Once they had scoured all of the available sources – the ancients and the natives – García and Acosta discussed the various theories. The most important ones were the Atlantis theory, the ten lost tribes of Israel theory, and the Carthage theory.

The Atlantis Theory

By the middle of the sixteenth century, the theory that the peoples of the New World had arrived there from the lost continent of Atlantis (as described by
Plato) was the most common and popular one. Agustín de Zárate had outlined in detail a theory based on the works of Plato which claimed that the Americas were either the western part of the lost continent of Atlantis, or that the New World natives had crossed Atlantis before it sank in order to reach their present location. Other mid-century to late mid-century writers seized upon Zárate’s theory and developed it: Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa, in his History of the Incas, described the lost continent in great detail, including which of the sons of Noah was assigned to populate it (Jubal) and how large it was (larger than Asia and Africa combined).

By the time of Acosta and García, the Atlantis theory had fallen out of favor. Acosta airily dismissed the theory, calling it an “...absurd thing...more like fables or stories by Ovid than history or philosophy worthy of the name.”(67) He ridicules the fantastic elements of the Atlantis story: “I would gladly ask what sea could be great enough to swallow such a vast extent of land, which was larger than Asia and Africa together and stretched as far as the Indies, and to swallow it so completely that not a trace has remained?” (68) He refused to take on faith the more magical elements of the Atlantis tale, and therefore must discard it in its entirety.

García did, however, take a new look at it. García’s seventh opinion (he puts forth a total of twelve) is an examination of this theory. Returning to Plato, the source of the theory (and largely ignoring the more recent writers who popularized it), García sought to evaluate the theory on its merits. The aspects of

24 The Atlantis theory did not originate with Zárate, but he made it popular.
this theory that most recommend it, according to García, are Plato’s credibility
and status (he makes a point of chiding Acosta for being disrespectful to the
ancient philosopher), the fact that if there had once been a continent between
Europe and the Americas it would explain quite a bit, and the little linguistic gem
“-atl,” a Nahuatl suffix meaning “water.” Note that “Atlantis” also begins with
the same three letters.

García added little that hadn’t already been seen before. Although he
found this theory more to his liking than Acosta did, he still was forced to admit
that the most convincing doubt to the theory was that “todo aquel cuento de la Isla
Atlántica tiene más arte de Fabula, que de Historia (144)” (“that whole Atlantis
story is more fable than history”), so much so that some writers had suggested
that the whole thing be interpreted allegorically.

There is, however, one segment of this section that I find important:
García was the first to add culture to the argument, something that never occurred
to Zárate or Sarmiento de Gamboa. By going all the way back to Plato, García
was able to check what he wrote about the culture of the Atlanteans and compare
that to the New World cultures he personally knew. García found ten cultural
points (161-162) that seem to him to indicate a connection, such as common
property, use of metal, rules of inheritance, etc. He found several coincidences,
although he neglected to mention (or realize) that Spaniards of his day would also
have many of the same points in common with the ancient Atlanteans (such as the
use of gold in temples).
In this sense, it is true ethno-historical association, unlike that practiced by Zárate, who thought mostly in terms of geography. García was discursively inventing the native by comparing him – by blood, this time – to an Old World race that had been known to Europe before 1492 (sort of, anyway: there is no evidence to suggest that the continent of Atlantis, as understood by the ancients, ever existed). The fact that the cultural comparisons are fairly neutral instead of negative – as we will see in the Carthaginian or Israelite sections – speaks more to García’s seriousness as a scholar than anything else.

Although he gave more consideration to the Atlantis theory that Acosta did, it was far from his favorite. García preferred theories that declared that the New World natives were descended from any combination of the following three sources: the ten lost tribes of Israel, the North African nation of Carthage and the biblical land of Ophir.

The Carthage Theory

The theory that the New World natives were descended from Carthaginians has its base in a story originating with Aristotle that Carthaginian sailors had found a rich land but had decided not to settle it. They didn’t want their enemies to have it either, so they put to death all of the sailors who had made the voyage. It had been a popular theory since the early days of the colonial period, as it was one of the few clear mentions in ancient writers that seemed to support some sort of knowledge of the New World.
Acosta dismissed the theory out of hand: he felt that Aristotle’s legend may have referred to some small island in the Atlantic, but probably not the vast New World. García, however, favored it.

García began book two of Origen de los Indios by declaring that the theory that Indians are descended from Carthaginians is one that is being discussed in certain circles: “Algunos ai que afirman, que los Indios proceden de cartagineses…” (41) (“There are those who affirm that the Indians come from Carthaginians…”). García then laid out his arguments in support of this opinion. The first major argument for a connection between the Indians and the Carthaginians is their use of pictures instead of letters. He cited Alexo Vanegas, who in turn referred to Virgil: Aeneas had seen, while in Carthage, a mural of the destruction of Troy25.

The next argument in favor of the Carthaginian theory is the presence, in historical records, of details of long voyages taken by Carthaginian sailors and merchants. The argument is, of course, that the Carthaginians were skilled sailors, more than capable of surviving the journey to the New World, even if they were blown there by a storm against their will.

Many of García’s most interesting comparisons are culture-based. In a section entitled “De la conveniencia de Costumbres de los Cartagineses, y los Indios,” he lists a number of customs allegedly shared by the Indians and the

25 García is aware that Carthage and Rome were founded at almost the same time and that Rome was founded long after the time of Aeneas, and that therefore Virgil was taking a lot of poetic license when describing Aeneas’ visit to Carthage. Nevertheless, says Garcia, that does not mean that the Carthaginians did not use paintings, and he reminds us that Virgil must have known a thing or two about Carthage in any event.
Carthaginians, including a veneration for fire, water, rivers, the wearing of animal skins by the leaders, piercings in ears, noses, and lips, eating dogs, drinking too much alcohol, the wearing of jewels (or, in the case of Indians, feathers) into battle and the use of envenomed arrows and war drums. The list continues, and grows increasingly negative: here Carthaginians and Americans alike are compared in their cruelty toward captured enemies: “Los Cartaginenses, y los Indios eran conformes en las inhumanidades contra los vencidos. Aquellos inventaron desencajar los miembros, cortarlos, desollar los Hombres, quemarlos poco a poco, deszocar los Esclavos, lidiarlos, adornarse con los miembros de los cadáveres…(51)” (Carthaginians and Indians are similar in their inhumanity toward those they defeat. They would remove or cut off extremities, pick men apart piece by piece, burn them slowly. Slaves would be maimed or made to fight. They would wear pieces of corpses…)

He went on to accuse both Americans and Carthaginians of being treacherous in war: using different stratagems against their enemies, including trade and diplomacy. Also, both are “mentirosos y fraudulentos” (“liars and frauds”) (51). At this point, García says there are more comparisons that could be made, but he feels that he has made his point.

Having supported his argument for the Carthaginian ancestry for the Indians, García continued by listing the different drawbacks for this particular opinion. One example of these is that the Americans do not speak the language of the Carthaginians. García had an answer. Even if it had been corrupted, he claimed, they all should at least speak a similarly corrupted version of it, whereas
in reality the presence of so many languages in the New World argues for ancestry from many sources, not just one. His answer to this is interesting and well thought out. He claimed that first of all, there are a few Carthaginian words in use in the New World (although he did not list any). Second of all, a Carthaginian ship might not necessarily contain a very homogenous group: the Carthaginians were notorious slavers, and it is conceivable that a merchant ship might contain several different people who spoke their own languages. Africans, Celts, Spanish, Egyptians, and Scythians are mentioned as merely a few of the possible peoples who might be represented on a Carthaginian craft.

Before going forward, I will list here, for the purpose of reference, the important comparisons that García made between the Carthaginians and the Indians. The only positive comparisons García could make was that both races were skilled sailors and stonemasons. He also mentioned several “neutral” comparisons, such as the fact that both cultures ate dogs. The negative comparisons are much more numerous: he compared the Americans and Carthaginians in terms of their record-keeping (inferior, to a Spaniard), their cruelty, idolatry, human sacrifice, veneration of the elements, lying, use of poison and excessive drinking.

The Ten Lost Tribes of Israel Theory

The lost tribes theory had been a fairly common one, and there is evidence to suggest that it was popular among Spanish non-lettered classes.
“García himself testified to the popularity of the theory among the common peoples of America, who, he said, thought the Indians descended from the tribes of Hebrews lost in captivity…” (Huddleston 69)

Acosta had addressed the theory that the New World natives might have been descended from one of the lost tribes of Israel. According to Acosta, there were those who see a connection because the natives “…are cowardly and weak and much given to ceremony, and cunning, and lying.” (Acosta 69) Acosta didn’t buy it, even referring to those who harbor such beliefs as “ignorant folk” (69). He did cede these ‘ignorant’ men a few points, such as admitting a Jewish tendency to go barefoot or wear certain clothes (as the Indians did), but when all of the evidence is accounted for, “these are very idle conjectures and have much more evidence against them than for them.” (70) What most seems to convince Acosta that the Americans are not of the ten lost tribes is that the Jews had diligently preserved their language and culture in so many parts of the world, yet these customs had been completely lost without a trace in the New World26.

García, on the other hand, was much more in favor of the theory. Addressing the question of how the Israelites might have gotten to the New World, he claimed that it was probable that the Israelites reached the New World through “Gran Tartarea.” (80) They also might have gone through China and the city of Quivira, which he believed to be somewhere in northern New Spain. His support for this argument was that many peoples, Jews included, had taken long

26 Possibly, Acosta is thinking about current events: at the time, the Inquisition was working very hard to catch and convict ‘crypto-Jews,’ or Jews who had converted to Catholicism yet were still maintaining their religious practices in secret. Many of these crypto-Jews were in the New World, having emigrated there through Portugal.
trips by land, including ones from Jerusalem to China. He also mentioned correspondence between Jews in Jerusalem and Calcutta as proof that Jews can travel long distances.

García established from the start that the Jews are in a different category altogether from the other cultures that might have come to populate the Indies (and indeed, those of the ten lost tribes were the worst of the Jews, for García). The Jews are, to him, the worst sort of idolaters. He did point out two things, however: the ten lost tribes do not include those of the tribe of Judá, which remained in Jerusalem (this distinction is important because Jesus Christ could not have been born to an inferior race and he was of that line). Therefore García, and presumably his contemporaries, divided the Israelites into two different subgroups: those that had produced Christ on one hand and all of the rest on the other. García went on to remind the reader that all of the tribes that settled the New World were not of the line of Judá. Also, he mentioned that much of his information for this section came to him by way of opinion, as opposed to science. By saying this, he distanced himself from the material just a bit.

The next comparison is that of lack of charity, a defect also shared by Jews and Indians. Both show very little charity to the old, sick, or infirm:

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27 The letter in question is partially reproduced by García and is an interesting document. It purports to be a letter from a Rabbi Ismael to another Rabbi in Calcutta. In the reproduced letter, Ismael explains that he is not writing the letter in Hebrew out of fear, and mentions that the Jews on his end are living in “grandísimo temor.” García will later in this chapter allude to the fearfulness of Jews, perhaps thinking in part of this interesting letter.
Los Indios es gente de muy poca, o ninguna caridad: y si alguna cosas dan, mas es por temor, o por algun respeto particular, que no de caridad. Y no solo usan esto con los extraños, pero aun don los de su misma sangre; y lo que mas espanta, y admira es, que usen esto con el Padre, Madre, o Hijo, y Marido… (90)

Indians are a people of little or no charity: that which is given, is likely given more from fear or respect than from charity. This goes not only for strangers but for family as well, what is most alarming is that this is true even with fathers, mothers, children, or spouses…

Another important similarity between the Jews and the Americans was the idolatry that is present in both cultures. For García, this is an obvious similarity: “Yo entiendo que no huvo, ni hay Nacion en el Mundo tan inclinada a la Idoloatria, como estos Indios eran en el tiempo de su gentilidad, en lo qual parecen mucho a los Judios…” (91) (It is my understanding that there is not and never has been a nation in this world as inclined to idolatry as the Indians were in the time of their gentility. In this, they are very similar to the Jews…)

He described the Jews as very idolatrous, again referring to the bible as proof. When Moses came down from the mountain, he had to cast down the idol that his people had been worshiping. He also claimed (91) that the people of the
ten lost tribes were even more inclined to idolatry than were other Jews. He mentioned that these tribes worshiped the sun, moon, stars, and idols.

The Indians of Peru worshiped rivers, springs, large rocks and mountain peaks, among other things (92). The Indians of New Spain were, of course, just as bad: “A donde se refieren inumerables idolatrias, y supersticiones, que tenian los Indios del Peru. Pues los de Nueva-España fueron tan perdidos, y ciegos en esto, que nunca acabaramos de numerar los Dioses que tenían.” (92) (In which are referred to numerous idolatries and superstitions that the Indians of Peru had. But the ones from New Spain were so lost, and so blind, that we will never totally be able to name all the Gods they had.)

At the end of this section, García felt that he has made his point about the Jewish ancestry of the Indians of the New World, and turned his attention, as he did with the Carthaginians, to the question of the evidence that did not support this thesis. Having listed the evidence in support of this Israelite theory, he turned to the doubts regarding it.

The first doubt to come from this theory is one that García had already touched on twice: if the Jews are the chosen people of God (as it clearly states in the bible), how can the obviously degenerate Indians come from them? In the first paragraph of this first doubt, he placed the Indians, on account of their “torpe entendimiento” (sluggish understanding) and “natural siervos” (natural servants) even lower than Negroes (100).

The answer, of course, has already been mentioned: The tribe of Judá, a Jewish tribe from which the Indians are not descended, was “ilustre” and
“honrada” (101). He blamed the fall of the rest of the Jews on their participation in the death of Christ. In any event, the ten tribes were lost long before the time of Christ, García reminds us. Another response to this is found in their physical appearance: if the Jews of old were of strong body and agile mind, then what happened to the Indians? He had already answered this in his section on the dangers of the New World humors to humans. (103) Like many of his contemporaries, he believed that the air and nature of the New World were harmful to humans and would cause degeneration over time.

García also mentioned the Ten Commandments, which are, of course, laws of the Jews. He went through them one by one, describing whether or not the Indians adhere to each one. All in all, García found that the Indians adhered clearly to eight of the Ten Commandments, weakly to one more (the one concerning lying) and only fail utterly in terms of the first, which concerns idolatry. This is enough for García to declare that this so-called adherence to the Ten Commandments further proves his point about the Jewish ancestry of the Indians.

A further objection was the fact that the Indians did not speak Hebrew or anything like it. He answered this by saying first of all, that Spanish and other languages are derived from Latin, which they no longer resemble very closely. Hebrew could be corrupted as well. He continued by listing a few words that are similar. A typical example is given on page 120: Anna is a Hebrew woman’s name, and Annahuarqui was the name of the wives of both Lloque Yupanqui and
Pachacuti Inga. He gave several other similar examples, all taken from the far corners of the New World.

At this point, García concluded his section on how the Indians may have descended from Jews. To summarize: the only positive evidence he mentioned is an apparent reverence for teaching and skills with stone. Neutral evidence includes big noses, certain similarities in clothing and burial customs, long journeys, adherence to the Ten Commandments (more or less), presence in the Azores of tombs with Jewish letters, both cultures being fond of baths, and the fact that both call all relatives ‘brother.’ As with the Carthaginian theory, there is a preponderance of negative evidence to link the two cultures. Both are fearful and timid, both have been punished with plagues sent by God, and they share a lack of gratitude and charity, are idolaters, and sacrifice and crucify victims.

The highly negative ten lost tribes theory had been around for a while, but García was the first to truly explore it. Many had compared New World natives to Jews, but linking them by blood was something new. In the second half of this chapter, we will see why the nature of origin invention took such a negative turn.

Other Theories

The theory that the New World was actually the rich biblical land of Ophir had been a popular one since the early days of the colonial period. Acosta took a brief but hard look at the theory before discarding it. His arguments were
very logical: “…the etymology of the word Ophir, and its reduction to the equivalent of Peru, I find unconvincing.” (45) Acosta preferred to believe that Peru was named after a native word for a river. Furthermore, Acosta noted, the natives themselves did not use the word ‘Peru’ to refer to their land.

Although García obviously preferred the Carthaginian theory and the Israelite theory, there are several more that he considered. In books four and five, García outlined the remaining seven of the twelve opinions. The sixth one, which gets a good deal of intention, states that the Indians are from the biblical land of Ophir. After finishing the Ophir section, García followed the Atlantis section with the eighth opinion of origin, that Europeans populated the New World through Africa. It is essentially an examination of Oviedo’s Hesperides theory. He even mentioned Oviedo specifically as the main proponent of this theory. It is not discussed in much detail, which causes me to assume that by then it had mostly been discredited.

García mentioned other theories as well, speculating that the New World natives might have come from just about any old world culture, from Swedes to Tartars. It is nevertheless possible to see that he favored the fourth, fifth, and sixth opinions, those that have the natives coming from Carthage, Israel, and Ophir respectively. Not the least of our clues to his true feelings is the fact that he devoted entire books to those theories and only a few pages to some of the other

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28 According to biblical legend, Ophir was the source of King Solomon’s wealth. Modern scholars have several theories but do not know where Ophir was. The Ophir section of García’s work is not studied in this dissertation, primarily because García’s arguments in favor of and against this particular theory mainly have to do with gold and wealth, and almost nothing to do with culture, making the section irrelevant to my study.
theories: Book two, which compares the natives to Carthaginians, is thirty-six pages long (pp. 41-77): in comparison, the theory that they might be the descendants of Trojans rates only a scant two pages (263-265).

What conclusions can we draw from the first century of origin debates? I believe that the origin debate was inevitable. The Spanish believed absolutely in their religious tradition of Noah and Adam and Eve and they believed that it therefore had to be possible to trace the Indians to a known race of antiquity.

Today, anthropologists and archaeologists do believe that they have traced the roots of the American natives to eastern Asia, using modern science such as DNA tests and satellite imaging to look for ancient trade routes. This was not really an option for men of García’s time: they simply could not posit any theory that totally contradicted the bible and the ancients. García was doomed from the start: due to the fact that he was constrained by the “rules” of the hegemonic discourse of his day, he was not “allowed” to conceive of the correct answer to the questions he posed.

If the ‘correct’ theory – as we know it today – was unavailable to García and others, what are we left with? A bunch of incorrect ones, it would seem. My reading of these theories suggests a sinister conspiracy. Presumably, these incorrect theories were equally incorrect: that is to say, there was as much hard

29 García’s fifth and final book is an interesting collection of Native American creation myths. It is a fascinating section, but García did not add anything new to the origin debate there that we have not already seen, such as a disregard for native record-keeping techniques, and he did not compare any of the origin stories he wrote down to anything already in the European tradition. For those reasons, I have elected not to examine that section closely at this time, although I recommend it for those interested in pre-Columbian cultures.
evidence for the Israelite theory as there was for the Greek theory, as there would have been for the theory that the Indians were descended from Swedes or Eskimos or even elves for that matter – that is, no evidence whatsoever. García was working with a number of theories, but had no hard evidence to support any of them. Yet he obviously favored the Israelite, Ophirian, and Carthaginian theories. Why would that have been so?

As there was no evidence, I have been working on the assumption that García selected those three theories, and that he had a reason for doing so. I have reached the conclusion that he selected these theories because of a growing state of religious fear and intolerance in Spain and in the New World, as well as an increasing intolerance for New World backsliding and idolatry. In the next section, I will show how the Spanish saw the Other: specifically Jews, Moors and their relation to God’s Divine Plan.

Natives, Jews and Moors in the New World

In the first part of this chapter, I showed how the most popular origin theories changed around the end of the sixteenth century to favor the Israelite and Carthaginian theories, which were very negative and prejudicial towards the New World natives. Accordingly, other theories, such as the Hesperides or Atlantis theories, fell out of favor. The question then becomes, why?

In the chapter previous to this one, I showed how the debate over the political history of the New World natives became subverted by apologists for the
conquest with a political agenda: they wished to silence the reformers who wanted to put an end to the horrors of the colonial system in the New World. Just as the political history of the New World was rewritten to support a political agenda, the origin history of the New World was rewritten in order to support a social agenda.

I believe that there were three basic reasons why the Spanish used discourse to invent the New World natives as Jews and North Africans. First, such an invention of them fit very well into the Spaniards’ own concept of their divine destiny. If the New World natives were Jews and Moors, then it allowed the Spanish to continue the reconquest of Spain – which they considered to be a holy duty – into the New World. This divine destiny went farther than defeating Judaism, Islam or Protestantism: it was nothing less than the eternal battle between God and the Devil, Good and Evil on the earth. It was believed by many that the devil was very actively leading the New World natives astray. Of course, allegations that Jews were in league with the Devil had been around for centuries. These beliefs, in turn, helped support Spanish claims of New World ownership.

The second reason for the invention of the Americans as Jews and Moors was the notion that it was in the best interests of the natives themselves. The Spanish religious men who wrote many of the treatises that I consider in this work were very concerned with stamping out idolatry wherever they found it. By being discursively compared to “heathen” races, the natives could more easily see the error of their ways and truly convert before it was too late.

The third reason for this invention was racism. Although racism as we understand it today did not exist in 1590, the attitude of exclusion that we know as
racism began during the colonial period, with notions like \textit{gente de razón} and \textit{limpieza de sangre} taking root. By asserting a Jewish or North African origin of the Indians, the Spanish were able to cast them into an existing subaltern class. Under the concept of \textit{limpieza de sangre}, or purity of blood, the New World natives could never aspire to equality with the Spanish. By inventing them as an existing class of subaltern, the Spanish were able to ‘save themselves the trouble,’ as it were, of having to justify their subalternization and repression on other grounds.

I believe that a combination of all three of these reasons led the Spanish to invent the New World natives as Jews and North Africans. I will consider each of the reasons in turn.

\section*{Spain, the Indies, and the Divine Plan}

Throughout the colonial period, different Spanish thinkers, writers, and even the common man interpreted God’s will in different ways. Early in the colonial period, one of the driving interpretations of God’s will was millenarism, whose proponents believed (among other things) that when the world was united under Christianity, a new age of men would dawn. Millenarism began to fade, however, with the rise of Protestantism and the resurgence of Islam.

Belief in a divine plan did not wane, but interpretations of what God expected from the Spanish varied. The Spanish truly believed that they were enacting their divine destiny in Europe and in the New World. It was a real-time
allegoresis of sorts: the Spanish were heroes in a divine drama, writing sacred history every day. Jews, Moors and Protestants were the villains in this play. For years, the Spanish could not decide if the New World natives were villains as well, or victims, duped by the Devil. By inventing the natives as Jews and Moors, the Spanish were indicating that they were, in fact, villains.

José de Acosta’s 1590 *Natural and Moral history of the Indies* is a fascinating document. Acosta deeply wished to comprehend God’s plan and where he fit into it: the conclusion he seems to have reached was that his particular role in this divine destiny was to facilitate the work of religious men in the New World.

To Acosta, Spain was taking part in a worldwide spiritual revolution of biblical proportions. Spain itself was, of course, the protagonist, and the enemies of Spain and God included Islamic nations such as the Turks, protestant strongholds such as the Netherlands and Britain, as well as the more insidious threat (to the Spanish hegemony) of Jews, especially those who had supposedly converted but who still practiced Judaism in secret (known as crypto-Jews). According to Acosta, God himself was quite active in seeing to it that Spain was able to fulfill its destiny. For example, Acosta claimed that it was fate that caused the brothers Atahualpa and Huascar to quarrel just as the Spanish arrived:

> The lofty aim of divine providence is greatly worthy of consideration, how it arranged for the entrance of our people into Peru, which would have been impossible had it not been for the
division between the two brothers and their supporters and the
great respect in which the Christians were held as folk who had
come from Heaven; this certainly means that in winning the lands
of the Indians their souls were all the more splendidly won for
Heaven. (Acosta 366)

But God was not the only supernatural being who was active in the New
World. One of the beliefs that replaced millennialism, at least in the New World,
was diabolism, which in this case was the belief that the devil himself was
responsible for the continued idolatry of the New World natives. In his excellent
study The Devil in the New World: the Impact of Diabolism in New Spain,
Fernando Cervantes identifies diabolism as a driving force in Spanish New World
missionary efforts.

New World diabolism had its roots in the 1530’s: “The crumbling
optimism of the second decade of Franciscan evangelization was a reflection of
the growing conviction among the missionaries that satanic intervention was at
the heart of Indian cultures.” (Cervantes 15). Within a few decades, belief that
Satan was an active agent in the New World was widespread and fanatical: in
1562, a group of native idolaters was discovered at Mani, in Yucatan. In the
subsequent tortures, more than 150 natives died, and at least thirteen committed
suicide rather than face the torturers (Cervantes 16).

The only question was about the nature of the relationship between the
devil and the natives. Were the natives mere dupes, simpletons who had been
fooled by the Prince of Lies? Or, were they active devil-worshipers, who understood and accepted Satan? “By the time of the third provincial council of 1585 a paternalistic attitude towards the Indians as simple-minded and pitiful belied a more fundamental preoccupation with the demonic nature of their persistent idolatrous practices.” (Cervantes 34-35)

The question of diabolism and the nature of the relationship between the natives and the Devil was addressed by José de Acosta in his 1590 treatise. For Acosta (and many others like him) the Devil was no abstract, no metaphor for the evil that men do or how bad things happen to good people: he was a real entity, independent, and very often present in a very real, physical sense. He could and did visit his servants on Earth: “There are reliable accounts that in this temple the Devil spoke visibly and gave replies through his oracle and that sometimes a spotted snake was seen, and this speaking and responding by the devil in these false temples, and deceiving the wretched people, is a very common and proven thing in the Indies.” (Acosta 277)

Acosta warns his readers that some of the descriptions of the natives and their rites may shock them: they are “inhuman and diabolical.” (250) Nevertheless, Acosta excuses the natives, reminding his reader that the ancient Greeks and Romans – as well as the Irish and the English when they were heathens – were just as bad (and they were eventually redeemed). At the end of his prologue, Acosta gives something of a preview of things to come: “…since the prince of darkness is the teacher of all the heathen, it is no new thing to find cruelty and filth and folly…” (251). By naming the devil, Acosta has identified
his antagonist in this enterprise: Acosta is going to tell how the New World can be wrested from the evil fingers of “the prince of darkness.”

The devil had a very elaborate and organized plan for the corruption and disgrace of the New World. The foundation of the devil’s plan was, as always, idolatry “because he knows that the greatest harm man can do to himself is to worship the creature as God, he never ceases to invent ways of idolatry with which to destroy men and make them God’s enemy.” (254-255). The devil had created a sort of vicious circle of ignorance: the worse things were for the natives, the more influence he had: and the more influence he had, the worse he made things: “The pitiful condition in which many Indians have lives, and still live today, enables the devil to make them believe, like children, in anything he wishes no matter how absurd it may be…” (263) Acosta does not propose doing anything about the “miserable conditions” of the Indians, but rather proposes breaking the devil’s cycle through religious education.

Acosta was one of those who felt that the natives were dupes who had been fooled by Satan (as opposed to actively worshiping him). Because of this, he tended to see native actions in a different light: “In their refusal to abandon their ancient rites and customs the Indians were not necessarily playing into the hands of the devil. Their behavior, in fact was no different from that of the bulk of the Castilian peasantry who merely needed instruction to ‘submit to the truth as a thief surprised in his crime’.” (Cervantes 27)

By identifying the New World idolatry as inspired by the Devil, Spanish writers such as Acosta reinforced the strongest justification Spain had for the
conquest and occupation of the New World: evangelization. Of all of the justifications the Spanish used, the most reliable was religious: even Las Casas did not question the need to bring Christianity to the New World natives. Pope Alexander VI had ceded the New World to Spain on the condition that they evangelize it, and the Spanish took that obligation seriously, even if they did expend more resources on exploiting the wealth of the New World than they did on the religious education of the natives. As for the link between the devil and the natives, Jews were often suspected of having ties to Satan. If Satan was active in the New World, and the natives were descended from Jews, the obvious conclusion was that there was some sort of evil plot that needed to be uncovered and defeated.

Linked to the notion of evangelization is that of crusade, or holy war. Many Spanish saw the conquest of the New World as a continuation of the reconquest. The Spanish had been comparing the conquest of America to the reconquest of Iberia since the beginning. Soldiers making landfall in a hostile area or entering a native zone prayed loudly to St. James, who had been the patron saint of the reconquest. The comparisons were obvious to the soldiers at the time:

La conquista pertenece igualmente a la línea de la Reconquista de la península Ibérica, lucha secular contra los reinos moros que había terminado con la toma de Granada. Los primeros observadores se apresuraron a comparar a los Indios con los moros
y los judíos...El revival de los entusiasmos de la Reconquista se explica fácilmente en ese contexto. (Gruzinski 1994 43)

The conquest likewise resembles the Reconquest of the Iberian Peninsula, secular war against the Moorish kingdoms that ended with the surrender of Granada. The first observers felt obliged to compare the Indians to Moors and Jews...the revival of the enthusiasm of the Reconquest can be easily explained in this context.

Claiming that any comparison of the New World natives to Jews and Moors was coincidental and due to the fact that Spain had completed the reconquest shortly before the discovery of the New World (some soldiers fought in both) is too simplistic. It is natural that some comparisons would be made between two enemies fought in such a short span, but that would not explain why the comparisons to Jews and Moors reached the level of origins.

By inventing the New World natives as Jews and North Africans, the Spaniards were able to assert that the reconquest had not stopped with the fall of Granada, the expulsion of the Jews, or the defeat of rebel *moriscos*. It had continued right into the New World. Although there were those in Spain who had their doubts about the Indies and Spanish treatment of natives in the New World, there were few in Spain who dared assert that Spain had acted improperly when it
had expelled the Moors and the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula. God had approved of that, after all.

If the natives were simply uneducated heathens, they had need of Christianity. But if they were Jews and Moors that had somehow lost their original faith only to replace it with different forms of idolatry, then they needed religious instruction all the more. In other words, by inventing the natives as Jews and Moors, the Spanish were able to shore up their strongest claim to the New World: that God himself expected them to bring the word of Christ there.

If the devil were to be defeated, it was necessary for the missionaries to know what they were up against. By claiming Jewish and North African ancestry for the New World natives, the Spanish tied all of their foes together neatly: Satan, Moors, Jews and New World natives.

The White Man’s Burden

The phrase “white man’s burden” was coined later in the history of European colonialism, to refer to how the British saw their role in their various oversees colonies. The phrase was the title of a poem written by Rudyard Kipling in 1899, in which he lauded the colonizers for bringing modernity to the colonized peopled of the world. The British felt that it was their duty, as a “higher” civilization, to share their culture with the less fortunate savages around the globe who still suffered in barbarity.
The British might have coined the phrase, but the Spanish were familiar with the concept in their own colonies a couple of centuries earlier. Many of the religious men who wrote the treatises I consider in this dissertation did, genuinely, want to help the native population, even if their way of showing it seems a bit offensive to our modern sensibilities. José de Acosta wrote his book, in part, because of a sincere (if misdirected) desire to help the native population: “...the aim of this history is not only to inform what is happening in the Indies, but to dedicate that information to the benefit that knowledge of such things can bring, which is to help those peoples to their salvation and to glorify the Creator and Redeemer who led them out of the profound darkness of their heathen beliefs, and imparted to them the wonderful light of his Gospel…” (Acosta 250)

As odd as it may seem, part of the reason for the invention of the New World natives as Jews and Moors was, indirectly, to help them: it was one way in which the natives could be made to see the error of their idolatrous ways. To understand how this can be so, it is necessary to go back to the early days of the Spanish occupation.

In the New World, the Aztecs and the Incas were only the most recent in a long line of conquering civilizations that held power in their respective areas. The people were accustomed to warfare, conquest, and the rule of those who dominated militarily. Traditionally, the victors did not deny the existence of the gods of the vanquished, however: they believed that their own gods were stronger and the respective pantheons merged, with the gods of the victors being foremost.
When the Spanish conquered the New World, however, it soon became apparent that with Christianity, things were going to be different: “Like the old invaders, the Christians burned the temples and imposed their gods. But they refused to share or superimpose, demanding the annihilation of local cults. Not content with eliminating the old priests and part of the nobility, the Spaniards kept for themselves a monopoly of the priesthood and the sacred, and thus of the definition of reality in its natural and supernatural expressions.” (Gruzinski 1993:151)

At first, the Gods of the Christians were easy for the New World natives to accept, and in the first years of the conquest and occupation, Spanish friars and clergy gleefully reported thousands of conversions. This was an illusion, however, as the natives willingness to convert was understood by the Spanish as a willingness to reject their old beliefs entirely. In reality, it simply reflected a willingness to accept the Christian god in addition to their own:

It is likely that the initial enthusiasm of the Indians to accept Christianity had more to do with the Mesoamerican tradition of incorporating alien elements into their religion than with any conviction about the exclusivist claims of the Christian faith. To the Mesoamericans, victory was sufficient evidence of the strength of the victor’s god. A people whose glyph for conquest was a burning temple was likely to accept the gods of the conquerors not only as a matter of prudence, but also as a welcome recruit into a
supernatural pantheon accustomed to the extemporaneous incorporation of foreign deities. What soon emerged, however, was that the Christian god, unlike all previous alien deities, posed a fundamental challenge to the existing system by his claim to total goodness and absolute sovereignty. (Cervantes 42-43)

The resulting misunderstanding caused a great deal of friction between the Europeans and the Americans in the following centuries. If the natives, once converted, continued to venerate their traditional gods, they could be accused of backsliding and idolatry, for which the punishments could be harsh. The natives, on the other hand, may well have accepted the power of the Christian god – they simply did not see how that required them to abandon their own gods, and they could not understand why the Spanish punished them when they continued to worship them.

Unlike the Aztecs, the Spanish refused to allow any of the old beliefs to survive. In today’s political speak, it would be termed a “zero-tolerance” policy. The decision was made, however, to allow the natives some time to get used to their new God. In 1512, the native chief of Cuba, Hatuey, was burned alive for heresy, idolatry and refusal to convert. His is a famous case: allegedly, when asked immediately before being burned if he wanted to convert so that he could go to heaven, he asked if there were Christians in heaven. When assured that heaven was full of Christians (and only Christians) he refused to convert, saying that he did not wish to spend eternity with such monsters. Because of the case of
Hatuey, it was decided by church officials that New World natives could not be prosecuted for heresy or idolatry, at least for a while. The idea was to give Spain’s new subjects a ‘free pass,’ as it were, until they understood Christianity and could accept it freely.

This tolerance was erratic, however. In the early 1530’s, Fray Juan de Zumarrága, the Franciscan Archbishop of Mexico, allowed the Inquisition to investigate and prosecute natives for heresy and idolatry. It was a controversial decision, as many of his contemporaries favored more tolerance (Cervantes 13). But as far as the Archbishop was concerned, it was high time the natives faced the music for their idolatry: “After all, the Indians were no longer innocent pagans awaiting Christian enlightenment, but proper Christians, baptized and allegedly instructed, and therefore subject to the same disciplinary treatment that was used in Europe against the sins of idolatry, heresy and apostasy.” (Cervantes 14)

In the end, however, it was too hard to control easily: if the Inquisition burned at the stake every native who continued to worship the old gods in secret, they would have run out of wood – or natives. Punishment was not the answer, at least not entirely. A far better method to prevent idolatry would be education, so that the natives would give it up willingly, and not merely as a way to escape horrible punishments.

The Inquisition had limited power over the natives, depending on the time frame or who was the ranking religious official, but it always had power over crypto-Jews, lapsed New Christians, or hapless protestant sailors or soldiers who wound up in their hands. Protestants were rare in the Spanish New World, and
usually limited to British or Dutch pirates who were captured by Spanish forces. García mentioned Protestantism in passing, noting that it was currently considered one of the gravest dangers to Christendom. He compared Protestants to Jews, while making his case for Jewish ancestry of the Americans. He believed that the Jews, like the Protestants, may have lost their religion because of bad influences from other idolatrous groups:

A esto respondo, que (como en otra parte dixe) la Gente de los diez tribus era muy inclinada al mal, e idolatría, y pasando por donde havia tantas Naciones de Gentiles, y Idolatras, con quien necesariamente havian de comunicar, y tratar, y de quien havian de ser hospedados, es cosa llana, que en tan grande occasion de les pegaria algo, y aun mucho, como se les pego en egipto…como nos consta que han hecho en Inglaterra, Alemania, y otras Partes, cuyos moradores fueron observantisimos de la Chrisitiana Religion, y Ley Evangelica, y por seguir su torpe apetito, la han perdido, y dejado caer… (108)

To this I respond, as I have already mentioned, that the people of the ten lost tribes were very inclined toward evil and idolatry. Passing through places where there were necessarily nations of gentiles and Idolaters, with whom they would obviously have to communicate and interact, and with whom they had to live, it is
plain that in a situation like that something would rub off; perhaps a great deal, as happened to the Jews in Egypt…and as we are told has happened in England, Germany, and other places, whose inhabitants were observant Christians, and followed Evangelical Law. Yet by their low appetites they have lost this and let it fall…

Here García compares the Americans not only to the Jews but to the Protestants, who were arguably considered more dangerous at the time by the Catholics. I find it interesting, however, that this is one of very few references to the Protestants in his work. This is somewhat surprising, as Spain had recently been involved in two wars with Protestants, in England (1585-1604) and with Dutch rebels in the Netherlands (1568-1598). García could not claim that the natives were linked in any way to Protestantism (especially considering that the New World was discovered more than twenty years before Martin Luther began the movement), but in this case, he did manage to draw a parallel between them. By linking Protestants to Jews, and Jews to American natives, he manages to link Protestants to Americans, however tenuously.

For the most egregious offenses, an *auto de fé* could be ordered by the Inquisition. An *auto de fé* was a public act of penance, which may have included confessions, floggings and even death, by burning at the stake or other methods. Public *autos* were spectacular affairs, attended by officials, clerics, nobility, and the general populace (Burkholder and Johnson 103). These public demonstrations of the consequences of idolatry and heresy were not intended for the Spanish
population of the New World (who understood the consequences well enough), but for the natives. The Inquisition could not burn natives for heresy, but they could burn Jews and Protestants, and make the natives watch.

By inventing the natives as being descended from Jews, writers such as García attempted to make the natives understand that they were just like the poor man tied to the stake: like him, they were descended from an idolatrous race. Like him, they were idolatrous in the present. Unlike him, they had a temporary reprieve from church justice – but who knew how long it would last? The message to the native: shape up, you could be next. It was a form of education, and it is important not to get too caught up in the horrors of the Inquisition to remember that when men like García tried to get the natives to give up idolatry, they were trying to do something good: trying to keep native souls out of hell. It is in this sense, that we can understand how by inventing them as Jews by means of their origins, the Spanish felt that they were helping stamp out the evil of idolatry.

This was the Spanish predecessor to the British “white man’s burden.” Their burden was to make the native see the error of his ways: idolaters who did not burn in this world would burn in the next.

A Pre-Existing Invention

The third and final reason for inventing the New World natives as descended from Jews and Moors is that it allowed the Spanish to place them into
a pre-existing subaltern class. Discrimination against the natives had always existed, in one form or another, but it had been tricky to find official reasons to deny them access to the priesthood and important posts or offices.

Early on, the Franciscans attempted to train sons of native nobility for the priesthood, opening the college of Santiago Tlatelolco in Mexico City in 1526. The experiment failed, however: “Some mastered Latin and could translate it into Spanish and Nahuatl. Yet the college and the effort to train a native clergy ultimately failed. Antinative sentiment among many non-Franciscan clergy fueled opposition to the ordination of natives. No alumni entered the clergy, and with its principal reason for existence negated, the Tlatelolco experiment ended.” (Burkholder and Johnson 95) Native Americans were prohibited from ordination from 1555 to 1591.

Why prohibit Native Americans from entering the priesthood? On the surface, native priests would seem to be a good way to combat idolatry. But the natives were denied access to the priesthood and to the scriptures almost entirely: “When the Indians’ dexterity with Latin surpassed that of many Christian friars, the missionaries banned the Indians from learning the language. Because the Bible was not translated out of Latin until the eighteenth century, this prohibition denied them direct access to scriptures as well.” (Seed 2001 120)

The reason for excluding natives from the priesthood was fear of contamination of Spain’s “pure” faith: “Prohibitions against religious education, Latin, and the priesthood for Native Americans ensured that they would have no opportunity to contaminate any elements of the Catholic faith, because they would
never be permitted to attain full knowledge or be completely in charge of teaching
others about the faith.” (Seed 2001 121) It was widely believed that when New
Christians – those recently converted from Judaism (“recently” could mean a few
generations ago) – became priests, they brought elements of Judaism to their
Catholic teachings. In order to avoid the same problem with native priests, they
were banned from the priesthood and denied access to the Bible.

The Spanish needed a reason to exclude the New World natives,
however. The most commonly stated reason was that of gente de razón, or
“people of reason.” St. Thomas Aquinas, the twelfth-century Dominican, had
divided people into two categories: those with reason and those without. For
Aquinas, those without reason – such as the insane or mentally handicapped –
could not truly sin, as they did not understand the consequences of their actions.

Centuries later, the Spanish would twist Aquinas’ argument to attempt to
prove that the New World natives were people without reason, and for that reason
they could be excluded from the priesthood. Aquinas’ theological argument thus
became used as a political tool, a way to marginalize the natives and further their
invention as subalterns. The classification of the natives as “people without
reason” also had the added bonus of giving the Spanish a somewhat shaky but
nevertheless serviceable legal right to the mineral wealth of the New World (Seed
2001 125)

But the gente de razón argument was not ironclad. Several prominent
reformers, among them Las Casas, argued that the New World natives did have
reason, and the point was often debatable. But there was another way to continue
the marginalization of the New World native and keep them from sensitive posts or the priesthood.

Both Jews and Moors – or, rather, those Spanish unfortunate enough to be thought to be related to them – were subject to a form of discrimination in the Spanish colonial period known as *limpieza de sangre*, or purity of blood. The basic concept was that anyone who had Jewish or Moorish ancestry was automatically questionable when it came to questions of ideological purity and trustworthiness. The concept is a little hard to grasp today, but the foundation of *limpieza de sangre* was not conflicted loyalty or potential sympathy – it was, in fact, the blood itself. Such individuals had a sort of genetic predisposition to heresy, idolatry or worse. It was, at heart, a racial concept: “…the word “race” did not exist in the sixteenth century and that the classification of people was largely based on religion. However, the underlying principle was racial. “Purity of Blood,” which served to establish the distinction between Christians, Moors, and Jews, was indeed religious but based on biological “evidence.” (Mignolo 2001 435)

*Limpieza de sangre* was a fascinating social phenomenon. It became a calling-card of sorts for an emerging class in Spain: the *letrados*. Drawn from middle and lower classes, they could not claim noble roots like some of the more illustrious members of court, therefore, they found other ways to claim exclusivity and status as a class:
By the mid-sixteenth century the letrados had assumed a corporate identity...They grew in prestige and from 1475 on began to predominate in the ranks of bishops. Those who held doctorates from the Universities of Bologna, Salamanca, Valladolid (and later Alcalá de Henares) were tax exempt, a privilege that put them on a par with the hidalgos. The letrados were a constantly expanding class, yet paradoxically they tried to remain closed and exclusive, especially through the statutes of purity of blood (*limpieza de sangre*). (Poole 7)

In Spain, *limpieza de sangre* was exclusionary in nature: it allowed the letrado class to ‘put on airs’ as it were and allow them to exclude others from their state of quasi-nobility. In the New World, no one was yet worried about Indian blood ‘contaminating’ certain functions of the colonial bureaucracy – questions about Creoles in the priesthood and in sensitive posts would come later, toward the end of the seventeenth century. Nevertheless, because the Indians were associated with Jews and Moors, and because Jews and Moors were associated with having blood that was naturally predisposed to heresy, the Indians were also considered suspect.

*Limpieza de sangre* was not a law: many converted Jews and their descendants were quite successful at court, especially if they were wealthy. It was very real, however, and not a vague, nebulous concept that referred to an unspoken bias against certain individuals. Once someone’s purity of blood had
been questioned, it could never be undone. This was true of all forms of heresy:

“Condemnation by the Holy Office was something that was never really expunged...The sambenito30 was permanently displayed in the local church so that the infamy passed to succeeding generations. From an early period, condemnation of an ancestor by the Holy Office contaminated a family’s limpieza de sangre.” (Poole 85)

That the natives were idolatrous was without a doubt. The evidence was everywhere. But in light of limpieza de sangre, their origin invention becomes crucial. Let us say, for the sake of argument, that the Spanish had decided that the natives were not descended from Jews and North Africans, but rather from Greeks and Romans (there was, after all, as much evidence to support one invention as the other). If the Indians were descended from Greeks, then if they rejected the devil and truly converted, there was nothing any more to hold them back from attaining equality with the Spanish.

After all, if they were Greeks, then they must have found their way to the New World sometime between the Great Flood and the coming of Christ. It was not their fault, therefore, that they had no knowledge of Christ: he had lived and worked on the other end of the world. Once the situation was rectified and the word of Christ was brought to the New World, faithful, ex-Greek natives could and would expect to be treated as equals – latecomers to Christianity, certainly, but no less saved because of it. If the gente de razón argument could be

30 A sambenito was a penitential robe worn by those who had been condemned by the Inquisition (Poole, 83).
overcome, there was nothing keeping the natives from the priesthood and other positions of status within Spanish society.

If the New World natives were descended from Jews and North Africans, however, their very blood was suspect: they had a genetic predisposition toward heresy. With their purity of blood thus questioned, the most the natives could aspire to in Spanish society was equal footing with converted Jews and Muslims. Perhaps they had never been exposed to Christianity, but if they had been, their blood and nature would have predisposed them to reject it. This invention of their racial character therefore gave the Spanish more of a right – a duty, even – to keep a closer eye on them, thereby further justifying the Spanish presence in the New World.

Chapter Four Conclusion

In 1607, Gregorio García dedicated an entire book to the origins of the New World natives. Although he listed every theory then mentioned – he had twelve opinions in all – it is evident that he personally preferred the arguments that the Americans were descended from Carthaginians (North Africans), the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel (Jews) and the biblical land of Ophir. These theories were highly negative and prejudicial. Other theories he considered but deemed less worthy included the notions that the Americans were descended from Greeks, Romans, Spaniards, Swedes, Irish or Tartars.
Today we believe that the New World natives arrived over a no-longer-existent land bridge from Asia into North America many thousands of years ago and spread out southwards from there (incidentally making García’s eleventh opinion: that the Americans were descended from Tartars and other Asians correct, by the way). This means that García, in the opinions that he held most likely, was wrong.

But it raises the question of why García preferred those theories over others. After all, there was exactly the same amount of what today’s scientists and historians would call ‘hard evidence’ to support the Carthage or the lost tribes theory as there is to support the theories that the New World natives descended from Greeks, Swedes, or Australian Aborigines for that matter – none.

It is possible to argue that given García’s strict society, the “real” answer – that the New World natives had come from Asia – was unavailable to him. In this case, his book was necessarily incorrect and he cannot be criticized for producing it. Nevertheless, he had options: he had many incorrect theories to choose from. Just because the road to historical truth as he we understand it now was closed to him, does not mean that we cannot consider which path he selected from the many that were available to him. This brings us back to the question: why did he take the path that he did?

The answer is in the situation at the time. The Spanish were still trying to stamp out idolatry – it was proving remarkably resilient – and trying to figure out God’s plan for then and for the New World. By inventing the New World natives as Jews and Moors, it allowed Spain to keep the spirit of the reconquest
alive, keep the natives out of sensitive posts like the clergy, and help show those natives backsliding into idolatry the error of their ways.

García’s treatise was last printed in 1729, and today very few modern scholars have even heard of him. On one level, it is easy to see why: he was a man who tried and failed to answer a vexing question at the time: where did the Americans come from? When historians stopped searching Aristotle, Pliny and Plato in their search for answers and started searching ancient ruins, burial mounds, and even DNA strands instead, a work like García’s seems quaint at best and useless at worst. For this reason, García’s work has been tossed on the ‘trash heap’ of history, right next to models of the solar system that have the other planets revolving around Earth instead of the sun and the notion that the world is flat.

But to ignore García on the grounds that his “science” is outdated – or deeply flawed from the start, as indeed it is – is a mistake, as his work can be of immense value to the modern colonial scholar. It is indeed of little use in terms of its stated purpose – to explain the Old World origins of the New World natives – but it does provide a very valuable and unique look inside the minds of those who were in the process of constructing Native American subjectivity.

By rescuing a highly organized, reflective writer like García from obscurity, I have found a great deal of enlightenment in the very theories that caused him to be ignored in the first place. A counter-colonial reading of Garcia clearly shows the power behind the misconceptions that the Europeans foisted
upon the natives. The power of these misconceptions is evident: although no one
talks about “purity of blood” any more, it is still true that Native Americans do
not enjoy full access to society in many parts of Latin America.

As the sixteenth century drew to a close and the seventeenth century
dawned, native subjectivity continued to be created, debated, written and re-
written by the Spanish hegemony. Whereas Sarmiento de Gamboa invented the
American natives as subjects unfit to rule themselves civilly, Garcia invented
them as unfit to rule themselves spiritually. These twin inventions were two sides
of Spain’s hegemonic coin.
CHAPTER 5: THE COUNTER-INVENTION OF GUAMAN POMA

By 1615, the Spanish hegemony had authorized its own version of Andean history. As we have seen, it was a construct built on religious zeal, the authority of long-dead scholars who never knew such lands to the west existed, financial and political need and a blindness to inconvenient facts. Consensus had been reached regarding certain aspects of American history: Sarmiento de Gamboa, Toledo, Polo de Ondegardo, Acosta, and Martín de Murúa all agreed, for example, that the pre-Inca inhabitants of the Andes had been nothing more than savage barbarians. Native histories were marginalized, and almost entirely left out of this process. Only a few native voices dared speak out against this process. As subalterns, they had no easy access to the discursive space in which these historical debates were taking place. One such voice was that of the Andean, Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala.

In this chapter, I will examine the writings of Guaman Poma and analyze the techniques he used to contradict and counteract the invention of his people that had been taking place in Spain and Europe. Guaman Poma’s work is extensive, to say the least. I will be focusing on a few key aspects only, those that relate to this study. I will specifically be looking at Guaman Poma’s attitudes
toward native memory techniques, his views on origins and political history, and the alternative histories he created. There are several good works that give a broader view of Guaman Poma and his work: most useful to me was Rolena Adorno’s *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in Colonial Peru*. Her detailed analysis of Guaman Poma’s personal life gives insight into his goals and the means he used to achieve them, while at the same time putting a very human face on the suffering of the Andean people under Spanish rule.

Guaman Poma was one of the first anti-colonial writers, having more in common with someone like Frantz Fanon than Pedro Sarmiento de Gamboa. He understood what was happening to his people at the hands of the Spanish colonizers and set out to reverse it, using their own language and discursive space. He carried the battle to the Spanish on their own ground – the written word – and tried to construct an alternative history for his people, one that contradicted existing Spanish histories and negated the colonial duality of colonizer/colonized, proposing, in its place, a partnership between two people with long and dignified histories of self-rule. What Guaman Poma did not understand (or understood but could not fight) was the fact that the histories of the New World were one tool of repression, not a legitimate academic space.

In the first part of this chapter, I will briefly review the state of the construction of Andean subjectivity as it existed in the time of Guaman Poma. I will show that Guaman Poma needed to contradict several important beliefs held about his people if his goal of Andean self-rule was to ever come to fruition. In
the same section, I will also focus on Guaman Poma’s relationship to Viceroy Toledo and those who supported Toledo’s ideas.

In the second section, I will show how Guaman Poma set about establishing his authority. In order to be a credible source of information for his intended audience, the king of Spain, he had to do two things: defend native record-keeping and appropriate Spanish modes of discourse. I will show how he attempted to do both, and how he modeled his own work on the other histories and crónicas that he so desperately needed to contradict.

In the final section, I will show how Guaman Poma constructed an alternative subject for his people, one that directly contradicted the portrayal of them made popular by writers such as Sarmiento and Toledo. Guaman Poma’s Andeans are wise and capable, and had good systems of government long before the arrival of the Spanish. In many cases, Guaman Poma points out that the Americans were better royal subjects than the Spanish. By contradicting the Spanish interpellation of his people, Guaman Poma proves that he understood that there was a war of invention being waged, and that it was one that his people must win.

Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala was a Peruvian Indian born sometime between 1535 and 1555. He was born to two noble families: on his father’s side, he was descended from the Yarovalca Allauca Huánuco family, which he will later identify as one of the most important pre-Incan royal families, and on his mother’s side he was related to the Incas. The Spanish surname de Ayala was
added, Guaman Poma informs us, after his father saved the life of a Spanish
captain, Luis de Avalos de Ayala, in one of Peru’s civil wars following the
conquest. He refers to himself as a *cacique principal*, thus clearly identifying
himself with the Andean nobility.

His actual status was somewhat in doubt, as documents relating to a
court case from the time identify Guaman Poma as a common Indian, with no
royal blood. In any event, Guaman Poma considered himself to be of noble
status, a fact which he frequently brings up in his work.

He was a ladinized Indian, that is to say, a pureblooded native who was
nevertheless Christian and spoke and wrote Castillian. He interacted a great deal
with the colonial powers, and served the crown and colonial administration in a
variety of offices, including interpreter and legal witness. He claimed to have
been raised in the palaces of Viceroy and bishops (Guaman Poma 1993 574
[710/715]31), and although the truth of this statement cannot be verified, it is
certain that he had a great deal of interaction with the Spanish. He was also part
of a campaign in 1568-70 dedicated to wiping out traditional Andean religious
practices (Adorno 2000 xlv).

Historical references to Guaman Poma are patchy at best32, but there is
ample evidence that in 1600 he and his family lost a long and bitter dispute with

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31 During my research, I used two version of Guaman Poma’s work: a 1987 edition and a 1993
edition. Some references refer to one edition, some to the other. Numbers in brackets refer to the original
manuscript: the first one refers to page numbers drawn in by hand by some unknown early reader, and the
second number refers to the actual page number in question.
32 In the Introduction to the Second Edition of her book *Guaman Poma: Writing and Resistance in
Colonial Peru*, Rolena Adorno provides an excellent summary of the various historical references to
Guaman Poma that have been found, some of which are quite recent. Her analysis of these historical
documents shed some light on Guaman Poma’s personal life, although much remains unknown.
another prominent native family over ownership of some property. Guaman Poma was apparently quite embittered by the loss and some details of the case appear in his work (Adorno 2000 xxv).

Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno

Seeking to redress the wrongs inflicted upon not only his people but upon himself personally, Guaman Poma wrote *Nueva Corónica y buen gobierno* in the early seventeenth century, finishing it around 1615. If Guaman Poma wrote anything besides this famous text, it has either not survived or not been brought to light. Because he appealed to Spanish authority, namely the King of Spain (Philip III at the time, although it is likely that Philip II was king when he began his work), he borrowed extensively from Spanish sources in creating the different discursive passages in his book. It is part crónica, part letter directly to the king, part sermon, part travelogue, part history, part question-and-answer didactic text and even part picture book, as the text includes nearly 400 pages of impressive illustrations drawn by Guaman Poma himself. It is hand-written, rambling, repetitive, and a bit patronizing and insulting: at least one theorist has suggested that had the king actually read the document, Guaman Poma might have wound up on the gallows (Dilke 16).

Not merely a letter to the king, Guaman Poma organized his work in such a way as to facilitate publication. The book, if the king decided to publish it, could be used to reform the colonization process and aid in evangelization. He
even included a page tally in case the work was printed (Adorno 1992 35). In this way, he attempted to imitate the Spanish writers he had read.

The historical sections are highly slanted and often contain glaring contradictions, but are designed to promote Guaman Poma’s goals, which are diverse. He envisions a Peru ruled autonomously by vassal princes paying tribute to Spain. The Spanish themselves would be gone (taking the blacks and mestizos with them), and all lands would be restituted to natives.

To achieve his goal, Guaman Poma attacks the Spanish occupation on many levels. He claims that the conquest itself was unjust, unlawful and unnecessary since Peruvian captains (his father among them) had greeted the Spanish upon their arrival and voluntarily and peacefully submitted to Spanish rule. He also rages against the abuses of the colonial system, saving special scorn for priests and colonial officials. He appeals to the king as one moral man to another, seemingly assuming that the king would leap into action if he were only made aware of the abuses of the occupation of Peru.

But Guaman Poma was a realist. He was well aware that even the most sympathetic king was not going to order every Spaniard, mestizo, and black back to Europe on the next ship no matter what the circumstance. Therefore, Guaman Poma outlines an alternative plan of Andean governance, in which local princes (himself included, of course) would rule and pay tribute to the Spanish king. He gives his reader, the king, assurances that the major enterprises being carried out

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33 For example, Guaman Poma lauds the Incas when discussing their rule in terms of roads, laws, etc. but condemns them for introducing idolatry into the Andes. What emerges is a very contradictory picture of their rule.
in the New World, in this case the flow of wealth into Spain and the conversion of
the natives to Christianity, would continue under native Andean rule.

There were many potential stumbling blocks to the implementation of
Guaman Poma’s plan, and he does his best to address them. One such issue was
the problematic that we have seen so far in this dissertation: that of the invention
of pre-contact Andean society. Guaman Poma, who was familiar with the many
books, manuscripts and treatises being passed around Peru at the time, was well
aware of the debate over the origins, nature, and capabilities of the pre-contact
natives. He was therefore aware that few of the histories, crónicas, and origin
theories were very flattering to the natives. Even Las Casas, of whose work
Guaman Poma was aware, was occasionally condescending to the natives and
never proposed Andean self-rule.

Therefore, in the midst of his reassurances to the crown that tribute and
evangelization would continue, Guaman Poma needed to create a new history for
the Andeans, a counter-invention that imbued them with all of the governing
skills, spirituality, piety, and courage that were denied to them in the other
chronicles, histories, and origin debates that were taking place at the time.
Guaman Poma refutes all of the negative allegations historically aimed at his
people almost point by point, and creates an alternative history that casts them as
wise, brave people capable of self-rule. He refutes the Christian allegoresis, the
myths that were beginning to be written into the history of his people.

He does admit certain shortcomings of his people – notably when
dealing with questions of religion and idolatry – but religion was the one area
where Guaman Poma was most willing to compromise. Highly anticlerical, Guaman Poma saw the abusive priests as one of colonial Peru’s greatest problems, but he was nevertheless a devout Christian dedicated to exterminating native religious practices and conceded that Christian religious guidance and instruction were still needed in his homeland. It is with this counter-invention, which included fitting the New World natives into biblical history, which concerns me in this study.

In my research, I have found Guaman Poma a priceless resource conceptually. A counter-colonial reading of his work reveals many of the discursive strategies by means of which the Spanish subjugated the New World population. In his work, it is possible to see the situation through the eyes of the resistance. His work was notably different from that of the Spanish: he defended the quipus, he noted specific dates for events in the distant past and he described a Christian history for the New World. Unlike other writers such as Gregorio García, Guaman Poma’s aims as a writer are obvious. By contradicting much of what the Spanish were writing at the time, he put into stark relief not only his goals and the goals of the Spanish writers, but also many of their methods. The invention of his people was taking place, and he answered it the best way he could – by appropriating Spanish hegemonic discourse to construct an invention of his own. He was a subaltern attempting to speak using a borrowed voice.

And who better than a victim of such an invention to show us clearly what was happening? “Es, en efecto, precisamente la obra de Waman Puma la que nos permite ver cómo las ideas sobre la dominación extranjera fueron
transmitidas y recibidas por cierto sector de la sociedad indígena.” (Adorno 1987 xxviii) (“In effect, it is precisely Guaman Poma’s work that allows us to see how ideas concerning the foreign domination were transmitted and received by a certain sector of the indigenous population.”)

Andean History Invention Until the Time of Guaman Poma

Let us consider the construction of the native subject as it had been developed by the Spanish in 1615, as understood by Guaman Poma, who had been well-placed to observe it. Even if Guaman Poma was not directly acquainted with the works of Acosta and García, who wrote about the same time he did, there is ample evidence to suggest that he was involved enough with Spanish colonial society to be aware of the debate over native invention and some of the popular theories.

The New World natives arrived here by means of the lost continent of Atlantis (Zárate), which subsequently disappeared. If this theory was not to be believed any more, others abounded: Carthaginians, Ophirians, Israelites (García) or Asian migrants (Acosta).

Like Jews and Moors, the Indians are lazy and idolatrous (Zárate, Oviedo, García). They scraped a living out of the hills for generations, having no rulers other than warlords and no knowledge whatsoever of Christianity (Sarmiento de Gamboa). If there were any element of Christianity in the New
World, it was surely only the presence of the Devil (Acosta, Cieza de León, Zárate).

Then the Incas arrived on the scene. They were a great improvement in terms of leadership (Zárate) but nevertheless were lacking in other ways. They were generally cruel, harsh masters (Toledo, Sarmiento de Gamboa) and when a sound leader appeared among them, it was considered a fluke (Zárate).

Throughout, there was no clear instance of Christianity until the arrival of the Spanish. Even the more charitable Las Casas and Acosta will go no farther than to claim a natural sense of God for them, common to all “primitive” people. By the time of the arrival of the Spanish, however, their religion had been lost.

As for history as related by the Andeans themselves, it is not to be believed. Even the sympathetic Acosta only gives them 400 years of credibility, and other historians of the time give them considerably less. Everything the natives had to say on the matter was fantastic at best, or lies.

Guaman Poma sums up rather succinctly what others were saying about his people and their history:

Y otros dixerón que los yndios eran salvages animales, no tubieran la ley no oración ni auño de Adán y fuera como caballo u bestia y no conocieron el Criador ni tubieran sementeñeras y casas y arma, fortaleza y leys y hordenansas y conoseimiento de Dios y tan santa entrada. (Guaman Poma 1993 877 [1080/1090]).
And others say that the Indians were wild animals, that they had no law nor speech nor clothing like Adam’s, and that they were like horses or beasts and that they did not know the Creator, nor did they have seed-beds or houses, weapons, or fortifications, nor laws, proclamations, and knowledge of God and the holy entrance.

This was the image of the past of his people that Guaman Poma needed to overcome in his letter to the king of Spain. To counter it, he needed to portray his people as capable of being both good Christians and also capable of sound self-government. If he could achieve this, along with his other goals of making the king aware of the many abuses in colonial Peru (was Guaman Poma naïve enough to believe that the King had no idea of these abuses? Historians seem to be divided on the question) and raising just enough doubt as to the legality of the conquest, he had a chance, he felt, of convincing the king to restore the Andes to their original lords.

To counter the invention of Andean past advanced by these other writers, Guaman Poma employed multiple strategies. First, he needed credibility to counter the charge that anything he said about his past was necessarily fantasy, as native storytellers and quipus were not to be believed. He did this the only way he could, by describing to the king the reliability of these methods.

Next, he had to show evidence that the New World natives were good Christians, or at least had the capacity to be. He did this by interweaving biblical
history with Andean history, drawing parallels where possible, inserting biblical figures into his narrative, and by blaming the devil for the Andeans going astray.

Further, he had to cast the Andeans as people capable of self-rule. He does this by writing long passages re-inventing pre-Inca Andean history, writing detailed descriptions of noble families and lords who wisely governed a peaceful people (his family was one example of such noblemen). He details just and merciful laws as well as bravely fought battles. He even defends the Incas, giving a detailed description of them as legitimate rulers who “followed the rules” as it were when the Spanish arrived and therefore should not have been invaded. He goes so far as to invent royal coats of arms – just like the Spanish ones. The overall effect is a mish-mash of styles and descriptions, a fascinating portrait of a man and a society in need of change. He mimics the Spanish construction of their own subjectivity, therefore adopting Spanish hegemonic discourse to legitimate his own “new” native subject.

Guaman Poma and Andean history

In this section, I will examine Guaman Poma’s struggles to make his concepts for Andean self-rule seem authoritative by means of his appropriation of Spanish strategies and methods in their writing. The first section deals with Guaman Poma’s struggles to legitimize his native sources, upon which he relies heavily. The second section will deal with Guaman Poma’s appropriation of forms of Spanish discourse to make his points. In the third section, I will show
how Guaman Poma adopted certain specific strategies, such as adding specific
dates into his work, to reinforce the impression of accuracy.

Like many Spanish historians researching the Andes, Guaman Poma had
to rely on native oral narratives and other traditional record keeping, such as
quipus, for his information. He knew that the alternative history he presented to
the king would not be accepted if he did not have credible sources: he understood
that much about Spanish discourse. He also knew that native historical
techniques were generally derided by the Spanish. Therefore, he needed to
somehow add more credibility to these traditional sources.

To achieve this end, he writes about his sources in reverential terms and
does not dwell on them, seeming to skip the issue in such a way that he implies
that their veracity is to be taken for granted. When he does mention them, he
takes more care to explain them, their uses, and those who were in charge of them
so as to create a greater understanding of their usefulness and accuracy.

As I showed before in previous sections of this dissertation, native
histories had long been considered inferior by the Spanish. Gregorio García is one
of the kindest historians to touch on the subject. Due to the Indians’ lack of
letters, he says, it took him a long time to compile their history.

García was one of those most impressed with the native historical
techniques, but even he admitted that the native histories were full of “Fabulas, i
mentirosas transmutaciones” (317) (“fables and false transmutations”) which
seriously compromised their credibility. García laments the things the Indians
have obviously forgotten: creation, the flood, the history in between, and like many others, he blames the devil for having led them astray.

It should also be noted that Guaman Poma was writing soon after the rule of Viceroy Toledo, who not only considered native memory recording inferior, but also actively went about discrediting these methods. Toledo’s goal had been to de-authorize the Andeans, and part of this work was to discredit the native historians. To this end, he enlisted his own intellectuals:

The amautas and quipucamayoc, or intellectuals, were perhaps the most important members of the panacas in terms of their historical function. Thus Toledo was pitting one set of intellectuals against each other, or one set of records against another. He was making sure that Spanish law, power, and historiography gained, once and for all, the upper hand. (Castro-Klarén 145)

Faced with this sort of bias against the native histories upon which he was forced to rely, Guaman Poma did the only thing he could: he admitted using them and claimed they were valid, describing them in such a way that they would seem more credible.

He also informs the king that he has taken pains to present him with the most accurate information possible. Later in the same introductory letter, he says that in order to obtain “las más uerdaderas rrelaciones que me fureon posibles”
(1987 8 [10/10]) (“the truest reports that were available to me”) he spoke to many people from many regions and would report the most common information.

Further mentions of quipus and other native memory traditions later in the text were treated with respect. When talking about the ancient lords of the land (1987 67 [72/72]) he says that they did not need writing to pass down their skills and knowledge, as they had quipus. The implication is, of course, that the quipus were perfectly functional record-keepers.

Guaman Poma later includes a section on the quipu-keepers, including drawings of them. He describes these men and their duties. These secretaries were, according to Guaman Poma, members of noble families and there was at least one of them in every town. It was their duty to record everything of importance. There were also traveling quipu-keepers who would travel with judges and mayors as they did their rounds. It is with these quipus that all of the area was governed, and the quipus and their keepers were “sin mentira y sin cohecho nenguna” (1987 362 [359/361]) “without lies or corruption of any sort.” The royal treasuries of the Incas were also organized by quipu-keepers. Guaman Poma describes their work and includes numbers, implying that the quipus were capable of accurately dealing with very high sums and figures.

Guaman Poma’s defense of the quipus and the other record-keeping methods of the Andeans is central to his argument. Since contact, the Spanish had assumed that their writing system was superior, and had dismissed all native methods and quipus as vague, inaccurate, or too full of the devil’s meddling or ridiculous fantasy to be of any use in learning local history. But Guaman Poma
had too much of his argument riding on his re-working of Andean history to fail to address the question of the accuracy of these methods. He had little recourse, however, but to simply state time and again that the quipus were accurate and useful.

Defending native historical practices was only half of Guaman Poma’s strategy for establishing his own authority before the King of Spain. He also had to appropriate extant Spanish discursive techniques and imitate the form that knowledge took to the Spanish. In other words, he had to write a book, like the books that Sarmiento and Acosta had written in which Andean history was invented. A counter-invention could only take place in the same discursive space: he needed to re-define – and re-invent – native subjectivity, which could only be done in the same space where it had originally been constructed. In this next section, I will show how Guaman Poma appropriated and imitated hegemonic Spanish forms of knowledge and discourse to effect his own counter-invention of the history of his people.

Guaman Poma and Spanish Hegemonic Discourse

In his work, at one point, Guaman Poma tells the story of the meeting between Atahuallpa, ruling Inca, and Pizarro and his Spanish forces. When Atahuallpa met the Spanish for the first time, the following exchange took place: Friar Vicente, one of Pizarro’s men, called upon Atahuallpa to denounce all other gods as false. The Inca responded by saying that he would not renounce his belief
in the sun and other gods, and asked Friar Vicente from what authority his own beliefs came. The friar replied that it all came from the bible, which he showed to Atahuallpa, who asked to see it. The Inca held it up to his ear, and, hearing nothing, threw it down to the ground.

This sacrilegious act gave the Spanish the excuse they were looking for to seize Atahuallpa and hold him for ransom. It is one of many anecdotes that Guaman Poma weaves into his complicated work.

The irony is not lost on the modern reader. Guaman Poma, unlike Atahuallpa, can hear the voice in the book, and he does not hurl it to the ground. Rather, he seizes it and makes it do his bidding. He sees the book – and with it the powerful tool that the Spanish have in their written word – and realizes the potential in it to redress the wrongs inflicted on his people. Not unlike Shakespeare’s Caliban, who learns his master’s language only to be better able to curse him, Guaman Poma uses the book to counteract the process of invention and reinvent the Andeans and himself. The same prolonged exposure to the Spanish that caused Guaman Poma to reject and despise them gave him the best tool to fight them: their own discursive methods.

In fact, Andean literacy is one of Guaman Poma’s most clearly stated goals. He wants more Andeans to be able to read and write like he can, and tells of having personally taught some to do so. He accuses the Spanish of actively discouraging this: he relates one case where a Spanish priest refused to serve a community where “too many” of the people were literate (1993 502-503 [620/634]).
Guaman Poma uses the format of the crónica to re-cast Andean history in such a way that it shows his ancestors in a positive light, and links Andean history to the bible as well. He knows also that the crónica was one of the most authoritative of the forms of colonial discourse: “Al identificar como corónica su carta al rey Felipe III, Waman Puma reconoce el hecho de que las narraciones históricas de la época representan el foro de debate más auténtico sobre los problemas prácticos y filosóficos surgidos del descubrimiento y colonización del Nuevo Mundo.” (Adorno 1987 xxii) (“By identifying his letter to King Felipe III as a corónica, Guaman Poma understands the fact that historical narratives of the time were the most valid forum for debate over the practical and philosophical problems of the discovery and colonization of the New World.”)

His re-creation of Andean history is a direct response to those Spanish writers who had gone before and created their own histories, and in the process created a negative image of the ancient Andeans, one full of heresy, idolatry, laziness, and ill-rule. The same books that Guaman Poma read in order to have a clear idea of the process of this invention were the ones he used format his arguments. These were also the same books he needed to contradict.

It is obvious that Guaman Poma was aware of the process of invention going on around him. It is impossible to know with whom he spoke: did he ever meet Acosta or Gregorio García? It is possible, but no one knows for sure. But it is possible to identify some of the books and manuscripts that Guaman Poma had access to and worked with. Guaman Poma did not always cite his references: he mentions Murúa, Diego Fernández el Palentino, and Zárate. In addition, Adorno
has clearly identified the influence of Las Casas in the *Nueva Corónica* (Adorno 1987 xxv). John Murra speculates that Guaman Poma may have had access, in Cuzco, to a significant personal library, most likely that of Cristóbal de Albornoz (Murra 61).

Las Casas was a man that Guaman Poma respected, in the sense that he liked many of his ideas on the philosophy of how the Indians should be treated and handled. Murúa and Zárate, on the other hand, were men that he sought to emulate stylistically, but he did not agree with much of what they said. (At least when it came to what they said about the history of the Indians: Poma did use Zárate and Fernández as sources on the early conquest period and the civil wars that followed, although he would sometimes revise their writings to insert the character of himself or his father into important battles, or to assign a more important, brave role to the Indians involved in any given conflict).

In the end, Guaman Poma emulated these other writers in the hopes that some of their authority would rub off on him. It was a clever stratagem, to try and speak to the Spanish rulers in the language they seemed, to him, to understand. It was not his only one, however: he also included specific details to reinforce his authority.

Specific Facts and Andean History

Guaman Poma’s final method for establishing his authority and credibility was to mimic certain forms of European discourse. To this end, he
cites the ancients, constructs his work in such a way as to mimic several different types of discourse, and also gives very specific details in his history.

The Spanish still relied quite heavily on the authority of the ancients in all of their texts. The age of enlightenment was still a ways off, and although the authority of ancient philosophers and writers such as Aristotle, Plato, and Seneca were being eroded by new discoveries, it was quite strong and very prevalent in the works with which Guaman Poma was familiar. Therefore, although he presumably lacked the formal education, with its emphasis on these ancient writers, that his Spanish contemporaries indubitably had, he nevertheless mimicked their style by including them in his work where he could, thus appropriating the authority that these ancient texts held at the time.

He gets off to an early start. On page 13 of his text, he mentions them for the first time, fitting them into his discussion of the timetable of the world:

Se pone y se escriue que será desde la fundación del mundo dos millón y seycientos y doze años desde el comienso hasta el acabo, como lo escriuieron de los tiempos y meses y años por las planetas y cursos de los dichos puertas y filósofos letrados, Aristóteles y Pompelio, Julio Zésar, Marcos Flauio, y lo escriuieron los sanctos apósteles y dotores de la santa yglecia. (1987 10 [13/13])

It is understood and said that since the beginning of the world until the end will be two million, six hundred and twelve years, as was
written of years and months and the planets, by the aforementioned poets and learned philosophers, Aristotle, Pompey, Julius Caesar, Marcus Flavius, and also written by the holy apostles and doctors of the holy church.

He cites these ancients very rarely. The only other time he mentions Aristotle is in the following passage, on page 72 of Guaman Poma’s text:

And so the philosophers Pompey and Julius Caesar and Marcus Flavius and Glavio Aristotle Tulis and the Greek and flamencos and gallegos as the poets declared, and wrote since ancient times and years, how to know how to sow. Those people, if they knew how to read and to sow, it was because of their curiosity, their cleverness and abilities, and they knew it from quipus, strings and knots, an Indian skill.
His citation of these ancients is clumsy at best, as he lumps Aristotle, Julius Caesar, and the apostles together along with other church scholars, implying that all of them would be in perfect agreement as to the exact number of years that there will be from creation until the end of time. Compared with his Spanish contemporaries, such as Gregorio García, who cited entire passages from Aristotle in his work and made them fit neatly into his arguments, Guaman Poma’s reference to them is laughable: he obviously had little idea of the nature of the discourse of these ancients. In his second citation, he only mentions these wise ancients to compare their knowledge with that of the Andeans, who had that uniquely Indian way of knowing things, the quipu. The preceding passage to the second citation is informative as it discusses native camascas (warlocks) and amauta runa (sages) who were well-versed in philosophy and astronomy. He does not cite any specific examples of Aristotle’s science, but makes a simple comparison between ancient wise men and moves on.

Did Guaman Poma realize how out of place his references to these disparate figures of history seemed in his work? I think it is unlikely. Guaman Poma was highly intelligent and well educated for an Andean Indian at the time. He must have known that there was more to the work of Aristotle than he was including, and if he had known a great deal about the life of Julius Caesar, it would have probably been in his best interest to compare him to some of the Incas or pre-Inca kings, as the image of Caesar as noble conqueror and skilled leader was a well-known one in Christendom. What I believe most likely is that Guaman
Poma knew very little about these historical figures, so important to Spanish discourse. But he included them anyway, in order to give his work the same air of authority that the Spanish manuscripts, tomes, and treatises being passed around Peru at the time had.

Guaman Poma also appropriated structures and forms of Spanish works, borrowing from those that he admired or was simply familiar with. He did it because he realized that this was the space in which the discourse affecting his people was taking place:

The polemical thrust of Guaman Poma’s book – and even its specific methods of articulation – have their precedent in earlier sixteenth-century writings, such as those of José de Acosta and Bartolomé de Las Casas, with which Guaman Poma was acquainted…Although Guaman Poma did not follow the pattern of demonstrating causes and describing effects in the learned manner of Acosta and Las Casas, he quickly discovered the potential of the apparently neutral discourse of history for embracing rhetorical arguments of persuasion. (Adorno 2000 6)

Adorno identifies the influence of many different types of contemporary discourse in Guaman Poma. Nueva Corónica y Buen Gobierno is part carta relatoria, part relación, part crónica, and part historia. (Adorno 2000 8)
Guaman Poma manipulates all of these discursive patterns in order to give himself more authority and make himself heard.

The final way that I have identified in which Guaman Poma went about imitating European style authoritative discourse was by adding into his work many specific facts, dates, and times. The Spanish histories he was familiar with were full of dates and years, and he felt the need to have that same sort of authority in his own work. The Inca system of quipus and storytellers was seen by the Europeans as imperfect and vague at best. Juan Polo de Ondegardo, a Spanish contemporary of Guaman Poma’s who, like García, had some measure of respect for the quipus and oral tradition of the Andeans as a memorial system, described the early Incas in this way:

…it is only necessary to know that as far as can be verified or guessed from what these Indians say, about three hundred and fifty or four hundred years ago, those Indians (the Incas) only held or ruled nothing more than the Cuzco valley as far as Urcos…(parentheses mine).
For the Spanish, making any temporal sense of the Andean past was frustrating work, and in the end, only a very general idea of dates could be arrived at. Guaman Poma, apparently wanting to counter this trend, is quite specific on many occasions. Examples of specific times and dates abound in the sections about the pre-Inca Andean civilizations and the Incas, their wives and generals.

One example is that of the era of the Uari Runa, the second age of Indians: “Desde la segunda edad de yndios llamado Uari Runa, descendientes de Noé, su multiplico de Uari Uira Cocha Runa que duraron y multiplicaron estos dichos yndios mil y trecientos y doze años. (Guaman Poma 1987 50 [54/54])” (“Since the second age of Indians, called Uari Runa, descendants of Noah, multiplied from Uari Uira Cocha Runa, these Indians remained and multiplied one thousand, three hundred and twelve years.’)

Guaman Poma is remarkably specific, especially considering that the age of the Incas came after the fourth age of the Indians, and the aforementioned second age took place over five thousand years before, by Guaman Poma’s reckoning. In other words, he is claiming that quipus were remarkably specific for periods of up to several thousand years. He takes care with these dates and relates them to Christian tradition whenever possible. For example, he places the birth of Christ squarely within the reign of the second Inca, Cinchi Roca Inga:

Del nacimiento de Nuestro Señor y Saludador del mundo

Jesucristo:

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Nació en tiempo y rey nó Cinche Roca Ynga cuando fue edad de ochenta años. Y, en su tiempo de Cinche Roca Ynga, padeció mártir y fue crucificad o y muerto y sepulado y resucitó y subió a los cielos… (1987 84 [91/91])

Of the birth of our lord and savior Jesus Christ:
He was born in the time and reign of Cinche Roca Ynga, who was eighty years old. And, in the time of Cinche Roca Ynga, he was martyred and crucified and killed and buried and resurrected and ascended to heaven…

According to Guaman Poma (1987 82 [89/89]), Cinche Roca Ynga died in Cuzco at the age of one hundred and fifty-five, which explains how Jesus Christ was born and died within the reign of a man who was eighty at the time of Jesus’ birth. Guaman Poma was generally equally as specific with the ages of all of the Incas (as well as their wives and generals) when they died.

In addition to directly contradicting what Polo de Ondegardo wrote about the likely state of the Inca realm three or four hundred years before, Guaman Poma is remarkably more specific. This exactness gives his sources as well as his conclusions a certain air of authority not present in the Spanish works about Andean history at the time.

More specific details offered about the individual Incas, besides their age at death, was their favorite clothes, the names of their generals and wives and
children (both legitimate and not) and the places they conquered during their reign (for example, Cinche Roca Ynga, Inca during the birth of Christ, conquered all of Colla Suyo, Hatun Colla, Puquina Colla, Pacaxi, Quisi Llacta, Poma Cancha, Hatun Conde, and Cullua Conde, according to Guaman Poma).

Guaman Poma borrowed techniques from Spanish writers because it supported his cause to do so. But why did he need to? I believe that he did so because having read the works and histories created by the Spanish for his own people, he saw how his own history and history-making techniques were dismissed as inaccurate. He defended the quipus and story-tellers, assigning specific dates and times to information he took from them. Then, he put all of this information into a form that mimicked Spanish discourse, as a way of establishing it as true. It was vital to his goal that the readers of his work believe him and consider him credible. If he could not contradict what every Spanish writer had been saying (that native history was accurate for at best up to four hundred years) then his project had no chance whatsoever of succeeding.

The question of whether or not he succeeded is immaterial to this study. In my opinion, his diligence in contradicting those other histories indicates how clearly this native intellectual understood the invention process that was happening at the time to his own people. And better than most, he understood what the stakes were if he and his countrymen let this ‘invention’ go unchallenged by a version of history from their own perspective.
Guaman Poma’s Counter-invention

Once Guaman Poma had established his authority by using the Spanish books and demarginalizing the native quipus and other methods, he set about creating an alternative history for the Andes, one that cast the Andeans as competent and fair rulers. He was, in effect, reinventing native subjectivity. He could not formulate his argument concerning his people until he had laid the foundation of authority that he needed.

Guaman Poma had many, many methods of making his arguments to the king of Spain, and there have been many excellent studies relating to these arguments. I am only interested in how Guaman Poma attempted to re-write Andean history. Naturally, I will focus on the twin problematics of origins and political history. As I will show, Guaman Poma did not spend much effort on the question of origins, although he did address it and what he did include in his work is quite useful. Of far more interest is Guaman Poma’s re-invention of the political and administrative history of his people, both the much-maligned pre-Inca and the Inca themselves.

To effect his counter-invention, he had to address himself to the areas of history and invention that he felt were most damaging to his people. He refuted many Spanish theories: in this dissertation I will consider origins, self-rule, the Incas, and idolatry.
Guaman Poma was very much aware of the theories that the Indians were related to Jews and/or Moors. He dismisses this theory in a very brief paragraph in the middle of his description of the Indians of the third age:

Others say that the Indians came from the caste of Jews, but if that were so, then they would look like them, and have beards blue eyes and blond hair like a Spaniard, and would have Moses’ law, and would be literate and have their rituals. And if they had come from the caste of Turks or Moors, then they would also be bearded, and would have the law of Mohammed.

Note here the subtle attack on the Spanish: if the Indians came from Jews, then they would look more like the Spanish. Even if Guaman Poma mentions this theory in order to quickly dismiss it, it is interesting that it is mentioned at all: it indicates that Guaman Poma was aware of the entire process of debate concerning their origins. Additionally, he must have known that in 1600, being compared to a Jew or Moor was not a compliment. Here Guaman
Poma denies any sort of ethno-historical association with any race or religion that he knows to be an enemy of the Spanish empire. He was therefore aware of the process and what the ramifications of being considered to be Israelite or Northern African would be.

He does not consider other origin theories. He does not mention the Atlantis theory at all, which, combined with Acosta’s airy dismissal of it a quarter-century before, lead me to believe that by then the theory had fallen out of favor. I believe that Guaman Poma felt that origins was one battle he could not win, as the evidence for even the most popular theories was weak at best.

Guaman Poma thus quickly refutes some of the finer points of the accusations brought against his people by Zárate and the Toledans. But it was one thing to counter the theory of the Indians as being Jews or Moors by simply dismissing it, or by not even dignifying the whole Atlantis theory by even mentioning it, and another thing to counter the more insidious allegations that the Indians never knew Christianity and were not capable of self-rule. In order to counter those allegations, he needed to create his own political history for the Andes.

Guaman Poma and Andean self-rule

As important as it was for Guaman Poma to contradict the image of the Andes as a godless place that was the devil’s playground, it was only half of the problem. Andean history had been constructed by the cronistas and historians as
not only full of heathen idolaters, but also completely lacking in any semblance of dignified rule until the time of the Inca.

As for the Inca themselves, many of the Spanish historians reluctantly admired them for their organization and communication systems. But as we saw in the previous chapter, the Inca had to be discredited as rulers in order for the occupation of the new World to continue. Therefore, they were re-invented as tyrannical, idolatrous and illegitimate.

Guaman Poma was not, in fact, very interested in defending the Inca. As we have seen, their cause was lost by 1615, and everyone in the Andes knew that there would be no return to Inca rule. The last of the Inca royal line, Tupac Amaru, had been executed by orders of Viceroy Toledo in 1572, and with him were gone any hopes of a return to Inca rule. Guaman Poma, who as we have seen was well aware of what was being written by Spaniards of his own history, knew that those writers, while they may have occasionally praised the order that the Incas brought to the Andes, and even may have admired such aspects of Inca culture as their stone work, still tended overwhelmingly to characterize the period of Inca rule as tyrannical and unjust. Guaman Poma did not see the point of refuting all of these writers when there was no chance of the Inca coming back.

Since the Inca were gone and thoroughly discredited, Guaman Poma decided to pin his hopes not on them, but rather on the pre-Inca nobility to which he was related. In fact, knowing that the Inca had no chance of a return to power allowed him to use them as a convenient scapegoat, and he blamed many of the problems the Spanish were seeking to “remedy” on them, such as idolatry.
But pinning his hopes on the pre-Inca brought with it other difficulties. The people who populated the Andes before the arrival of the Spanish had already been invented as barbarous, superstitious, and violent. Martín de Murúa, writing at the same time as Guaman Poma, describes the Pre-Inca state of the Andes thus:

...antiguamente no hubo en todas estas provincias señor general, sino que en cada provincia, nación y parentela se gobernaban por el más principal della, sin pueblos en orden ni policía, como agora están y como lo estuvieron en el tiempo de los yngas, y tenían sus pueblos, o por mejor decir poblaciones, unas apartadas de otras, en cerros o valles donde hallaban más comodidad…y entre si se guerreaban por aumentar y defender sus términos y chacaras los vecinos unos por otros… (Murúa 9)

…in olden times, there was no general leader in these provinces, but rather every province, nation, and family group was ruled by their own leader, and there were no orderly towns or control, like there is now or like there was in the time of the Inca. And they had their towns (which were more like settlements, really), all spread apart, on hills or valleys where they were comfortable…they

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34 Murúa and Guaman Poma knew one another: apparently, Guaman Poma deeply despised Murúa.

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would war among themselves and their neighbors to gain land or defend their borders or agricultural plots…

Guaman Poma needed to combat this negative image of his people. He knew that if the king were allowed to retain this image of brutal, lawless people who had been beaten into submission by the Incas, he never would allow them to return to self-rule. So he re-wrote the political history in such a way as to cast a much more favorable light on the pre-Inca peoples of the Andes and his family in particular.

Guaman Poma’s pre-Incas were decent industrious people, who worked hard, lived cleanly, and obeyed laws. There were just kings and a strict code of laws and norms, which he describes in detail. There were philosophers and astronomers. All in all, a people worthy of self-rule. He identifies four ages in the history of the Indians up until the time of the arrival of the Inca, and he describes the people in each of them.

The first age of Indians, who were direct descendents of Noah, (1987 46 [49/49]), were simple, but they knew the Creator and were not idolaters. They had “legitimate” lords (1987 49 [51/51]).

The second age of Indians, which Guaman Poma very specifically informs us lasted 1,312 years (1987 50[54/54]), was similar. The people were somewhat crude – they built only small houses, and dressed not in clothing but in animal skins – but nevertheless were good Christians and good citizens: “Y rrespetaron a sus padres y madres y señores y a unos y con otros se obedecieron.”
(1987 50 [55/55]) (“And they respected their fathers and mothers and lords and obeyed one another.”)

The third age of Indians was very fruitful and expanded beyond the borders of the kingdom. (1987 54 [58/58]) They began to make and weave clothing, and built stone houses and good roads. They had the institution of marriage and had good examples of doctrine and punishments. There was a good system of law, and they did not allow idolatry or witchcraft (1987 54 [58/58]).

The fourth age of Indians, the one that immediately preceded the age of the Incas, is the one that gets the most attention from Guaman Poma, and the one in which the pre-Inca peoples of the Andes are most clearly described, for good and bad. He is more conflicted about this age, and often contradicts himself when he describes them. They were, he says, “muy crueles que se rrobaron sus haciendas, rropa, plata, oro, cobre, hasta lleualle las piedras de moler…y muy belicosos yndios y traydores.” (1987 60 [64/64]) (“Very cruel, who robbed each other’s homes, clothing, silver, gold, copper, even the grinding stones…very bellicose and treacherous Indios.”) Yet he contradicts this very negative image a few lines later: “Adoraron a Dios y Criador como los antiguos yndios y abía mucha caridad y mandamiento desde antiguo, buenos hombres y buenas mugeres, y mucha comida y muy mucho multiplico de yndios y ganados.” (1987 60 [65/65]) (“They adored God and the creator like the ancient Indians did, and there was much charity and commandment from way back, good men and women, plenty of food, and the Indians and their livestock multiplied greatly.”)
What emerges is a conflicted picture of the Indios of the fourth age. In general, however, the positives tend to win out over the negatives. In terms of war, the fourth age was, Guaman Poma admits, a more bellicose era than the previous three. But even then, it was always battles of one legitimate king against another and the warriors were very brave (1987 60 [64/64]).

Guaman Poma, seeking to dispel the notion that the Pre-Inca inhabitants of the Andes were ruled only by the strongest among them, legitimizes the rulers by giving them titles: “Abido grandes reys y señores y señoras principales y caballeros, duques y condes y marqueses en todo el reyno. Sobre ello fue emperador apo [poderoso señor} Guaman Chaua, Yaro Uillca.” (1987 61 [65/65]) (“There were great kings, and lords and ladies, and gentlemen, dukes, counts, marquises all throughout the kingdom. Above them was the emperor apo [powerful lord] Guaman Chaua, Yaro Uillca.35”) Giving these local lords titles that a European would recognize – count, duke, etc. – is Guaman Poma’s way of legitimizing them, thus contradicting the prevalent image perpetuated by the Toledans of brutish hordes of Indians led by whoever was strongest that particular day.

Wise old men were in charge of a sound system of justice and punishment. Children learned the rules and were punished when they failed to do so. He compares these wise old men with the Roman Cato, who gave good examples that children could follow. (1987 63 [68/68]) The government was therefore very effective. Here Guaman Poma attempts an ethno-historical

35 Guaman Poma tells us elsewhere that he is a descendant of the emperor Guaman Chaua Yaro Uillca, although he does not elaborate on this family tie at this point in the text.
association of his own: by comparing the Indians to Romans, he seeks to change their image.

Not only were the rulers strong and legitimate (if somewhat bellicose), but the people were good, too. They ate in public, so as to make sure the poor were all fed (1987 62 [66/66]). The women of the fourth age were exemplary: they were still virgins if they married in their thirties or forties, had a dowry system, and never committed adultery. There were clear marriage rites, and baptism rituals as well. (1987 62-62 [67/67]). All in all, Guaman Poma concludes, the people of the fourth age of Indians were a lot better off than the present ones were:

…cin ydulatrar, cin hazer mocha [reverenciar] a las uacas ni seremonias. Comían y beuían y se holgauan cin tentación de los demonios, ni se matauan ni se enborrachauan como en este tiempo de español cristiano. Son todos borrachos y matadores, canbalacheros y no ay justicia. (1987 62 [67/67])

…Without idolatry, without making mocha [reverence] to uacas, nor ceremonies. They ate and drank and rested without demonic temptation and they did not kill each other or get drunk like they do now in the time of Christian Spain. They’re all drunk and murderers, and there is no justice.
The fourth age of the Indians was also a time of intellectual and social advances. There were philosophers and astrologers, grammarians, and poets. He compares these learned Indians to Pompey and Julius Caesar. (1987 63 [68/68]) They were able to see the future in the stars and in other natural occurrences.

The Indians of the fourth age, as described by Guaman Poma, sharply contrast to the Indians described by the Toledans some forty years previous, and those still being described by Murúa in the present. Guaman Poma answers the Toledan charges against the pre-Inca people almost point by point. The Toledans described a people who were led by warriors who appeared in battle, who did not have any sort of civil order or norms, and who lacked any sort of science or art. Guaman Poma, rejecting this invention of the pre-Inca Andeans, reconstructs the past in such a way as to make it diametrically opposed to the way the Toledans had described it. In doing so, he upends the conclusions reached by the Toledans – that the Indians needed the Spanish to govern them, lest they fall back onto their old ways. Guaman Poma denies this, and even implies that even if the Andeans did go back to the old ways of those days, it would be for the better of all, because those people were better “Christians” than the Spanish.

Guaman Poma and the Inca

Guaman Poma seemingly has conflicting feelings about the Inca and their period of rule in the Andes. He does not totally condemn them, and yet their portrait is nothing like the utopia he describes when writing about the situation
that existed in the Andes before their dominion. His depictions of them swing back and forth from positive to negative frequently. It seems odd that this should be so: Guaman Poma was related to the Inca, and he was very proud of his family. Yet he most clearly stresses the deeds and noble history of his father’s side of the family, eschewing his Inca half. It presents something of a puzzle, as his occasional negative portrayals of the Incas seem to contradict his goal of a return to Andean self-rule.

As always with Guaman Poma, the answer to this riddle lies in his intended argument: upon closer inspection, I believe that his up-and-down re-invention of Inca history does not, in fact, sabotage his goals but rather skillfully advances them. He is kind to the Inca when it suits part of his argument – such as when arguing the fact of their legitimacy as rulers – and is judgmental of them when it suits other arguments, such as when he condemns them for bringing idolatry to the Andes.

And so Guaman Poma’s strategy is this: having already re-invented the pre-Inca past of the Andes as a peaceful, Christian time, in which good men and women practiced acts of charity and mercy, he turns to the Incas and blames them for the spiritual downfall of these people. It was the Incas, he implies, who allowed the Devil to gain a toehold in the New World. The implication is, of course, that now that the Inca have been removed, the people of the Andes can return to their natural state of peaceful, natural Christianity and can be good vassals for the king of Spain – and the Spanish can go home.
On the other hand, Guaman Poma is not too hard on the Incas, because for other parts of his argument, he needs to portray them in a more positive light. Guaman Poma was well aware that some people, among them Las Casas, had quite vocally raised the question of the legitimacy of the conquest in the New World. It had become a hotly debated topic, and these questions, as we have seen, even changed drastically the course and content of the whole origin and history debate of the New World.

Guaman Poma wanted to keep those questions in the forefront of the king’s mind. He must have known that the king was the only one who counted in this whole process of debate. Therefore he must be kind enough to the Incas to legitimize their rule, because even though they were a convenient scapegoat for crimes, such as idolatry, that Guaman Poma knew he could not contest, if he was too hard on them, he would be adding fuel to those – such as the Toledans – who had been arguing for years that the Incas were not the legitimate rulers of Peru.

Guaman Poma’s construction of the Incas is therefore twofold and contradictory. He argues that their rule, while in many ways bad spiritually for the inhabitants of the lands they ruled, was nevertheless beneficial socially and culturally. The Incas were, he concludes, good if misguided rulers who imposed themselves on the Andeans and led them astray. If that was true, therefore, then there was no reason for the Spanish to stay.

The Inca and Idolatry
Guaman Poma blamed Mama Uaco, wife and mother of the first Inca Mango Capac, for the introduction of idolatry into the Andes. He also blamed Mango Capac himself for beginning the cult of the sun and the moon, which he had been instructed to do by “los uacas y demonios.” (1987 81 [87/87]) (“the uacas and demons”). Guaman Poma casts a great deal of doubt upon Mango Capac, even hinting that he might not have been a legitimate ruler, for the following reasons:

Lo primero, porque no tubo tierra ni casa antiquicima para ser rrey; lo segundo, fue hijo del demonio, enemigo de Dios y de los hombres, mala serpiente, amaro. Lo terzero, de dezir que es hijo del sol y de la luna es mentira. Lo quarto, de nazer cin padre y la madre fue mundana, primer hechisera, la mayor y maystra criada de los demonios…. (1987 75 [82/82])

First of all, because he had neither land nor ancient house, in order to be king, second, because he was the son of the devil, enemy of God and man, an evil serpent or amaro. Third, because claiming to be the son of the sun and the moon is a lie. Fourth, having been born with no father and the mother was a sorceress, a mistress trained by demons…
Later on, in the section entitled “Capítulo de los idolos,” Guaman Poma is very specific when detailing what sort of idolatry the Incas were involved in. He describes conversations between Incas and their uacas and demons. He also details sacrifices that were made, such as ones of beautiful ten year old children. (1987 254 [262/264]) He also describes traditional Inca rites, casting them in an idolatrous light. The festivals of the sun and moon, for example, are described as idolatrous. (1987 256 [265/267])

The Incas were not only great idolaters, but also supported witchcraft and sorcery. These sorcerers were guilty of a great many things during the reign of the Incas. They could cast spells to poison people, make them fall in love, and could cast curses. They got their information from speaking to hell. (1987 266 [274/276]) They could even fool the agents of justice who came looking for them.

Other than the presence of idolatry and witchcraft, Guaman Poma is relatively kind to the Inca. In his biographies of the twelve Inca rulers, he portrays them as human, with strengths and faults. He finds it lamentable that they sinned in the ways that they did. Immediately following his biographies, he takes a moment to address them personally:

O perdido Ynga! Ací te quiero dezir porque desde que entrastes fuestes ydúlatra, enemigo de Dios porque no as seguido la ley antigua de conoser al señorYQué es lo que entró en los corasones de bosotros y de nuestra agüela Mama Uaco…entró los demonios,
mala serpiente...y te a puesto y enpremido la ley de ydúlatra y seremonias, aunque no la hizistes dexar los dies mandamientos y las buenas obras de misericordia. Ací dexárades de la ydúlatra y tomárades lo de Dios que fuera de bosotros; fuérades grandes santos del mundo. (1987 113-114 [119/119])

Oh, lost Inca! I call you that because since you entered you were idolatrous, enemy of God because you have not followed the ancient law of knowing the lord...What was it that entered your hearts and the heart of your grandmother Mama Uaco? The devils entered, foul serpent...and you took and kept the law of idolatry and ceremonies, even though you never lost the Ten Commandments and good acts of mercy. Had you only abandoned your idolatry and taken that of God that was for you, you would have been great saints of the land.

Thus it was their idolatrous ways that brought about the just downfall of the Incas. But Guaman Poma seems to forgive them for that, especially now that the Andeans are in a position to reform their religion. He also notes that no matter how idolatrous they became, there were aspects of Christianity, such as the Ten Commandments, that they never forgot.

The overall impression one receives is that the Inca were somehow duped, although Guaman Poma is much less likely to hold the devil accountable
for the state of the Andes than most of his Spanish contemporaries: he appears as antagonist in Guaman Poma considerably less than in other writers, such as Acosta or Cieza de León. The Incas in turn forced their brand of religion on the Andes and in the process caused their fall into idolatry. Nevertheless, the Incas were, for all their faults, the legitimate rulers of the Andes.

A Positive Re-invention: the Incas as Rulers

Guaman Poma’s Incas might have been idolatrous and tolerant of witchcraft, but he does not deny that they were good rulers and totally legitimate in their reign. He does this by constantly referring to them as legitimate, and also by proving that they were decent rulers.

Guaman Poma’s first technique is a very straightforward one: he frequently used the term ‘legitimate’ when referring to the Incas. One example: “…y desde que comenzó a reynar los dichos Yngas y acabar su reyón, como se acabó y consumió su reyón, los dichos legítimos de derechos que reynaron mil y quinientos y quinze años de señorear en la tierra estos dichos Yngas y reys.” (1987 80 [87/87]) (“…and from the time the Incas began to rule and the time their reign ended, and was consumed, the rightful legitimate Incas ruled these lands for 1,515 years.”) Examples abound of this sort of reference to the Incas, creating a sort of background noise of legitimacy.

Not content to simply refer to them as legitimate, Guaman Poma also goes about demonstrating some aspects of just rule on their behalf. The Incas
were very organized, and there were clear ranks in their government. The laws that Guaman Poma describes are fair, and lead to the conclusion that the Incas favored an orderly and respectful realm. He often includes the punishment for breaking a law in with his description of it. One example of such a law is the one that governed how children should behave:

Item: We decree that boys and children must be obedient to their parents, and other elders and lords and officers of this realm. Failure to comply: for the first offense, a whipping. For the second offense, they shall be sent to the gold or silver mines.

Guaman Poma includes an extensive section in his work detailing these laws and their punishments under the Inca rule. Other laws include ones concerning inheritance rights, where pigs should be kept, what was to be done with murderers, laws prohibiting feasts during times of famine or pestilence, laws prohibiting marriage to one’s own sister, etc. It is also mandated that captains
These laws were so good and just, in fact, according to Guaman Poma, Viceroy Toledo himself had studied them and kept the best of them. (1987 185 [193/195])

Later on, Guaman Poma will return to the question of justice, when he dedicates an entire section to the punishments handed out by the Incas for various crimes. The rules were strict and the punishments severe. For example, having pre-marital sexual relations was a punishable offense: in the case of rape, the rapist would be punished: if it was consensual, both would be. The punishment, drawn in graphic detail by Guaman Poma, was to be hanged by their hair from a tree, until death. (1987 306 [309/311])

Guaman Poma’s final act of legitimizing native rule is a much more philosophical one. In his section “Conzederación,” which appears late in the text, he asks deep questions about the state of the Andes. He comes to the conclusion that the Spanish do not belong there, and he spells out his reasons why quite clearly:

…y los yndios son propetartios naturales deste rreyno, y los españoles, naturales de España. Acá en este rreyno son estrangeros, mitimays.

Cada uno en su rreyno son propetarios lexítimos, poseedores, no por el rrey sino por Dios y por justicia de Dios: Hizo el mundo y la tierra y plantó en ellas cada cimente, el español en Castilla, el yndio en las Yndias, el negro en Guinea. Y ancí como los yndios
no tengan ydúltera y tengan cristiandad y capilla, aunque sea dos yndios, cada año se truequen por alcalde de canpo porque ayga en ellos Dios y la justicia y rrey, que entra propetario y legítimo señor. Porque es Ynga y rrey, que otro español ni padre no tiene que entrar porque el Ynga es propetario y legítimo rrey. (1987 1005 [915/929])

…and the Indians are the natural lords of this kingdom, and the Spanish, in Spain. Here in this land they are outsiders, mitimays36. Each one in their own land is the legitimate owner and lord, not because of the king, but by God and the divine justice. He created the world and placed there the seeds: the Spaniard in Castille, the Indian in the Indies, the blacks in Guinea. And so, as the Indians are not idolatrous and have religion, even though it may be two Indians, traded for rural mayor, because they have God in them and justice and the king, who is the legitimate ruler and owner, can go there. The king is the Inca, and there is no reason for the Spaniard or the priest to enter because it is the job of the Inca, the legitimate king.

36 Mitimays were natives relocated from one village to another under the Inca system.
Here Guaman Poma appeals to a higher power than that of a king: divine will itself. God had put the Spanish in Spain and the Indians in the Andes. So who were the Spanish to question His wisdom in doing so? This final, last-ditch attempt to establish the legitimacy of the Incas is also his most heartfelt. Adorno identifies this section as one that Guaman Poma borrowed from Las Casas:

Siguiendo a Las Casas, Waman Puma insiste en que los andinos no están sujetos a ningún gobernante español, sea por hecho o derecho. Las razones que da son las expresadas por Las Casas: los andinos no habían usurpado ninguna tierra de cristianos ni les habían hecho daño alguno; no habían sido nunca subyugados por ningún príncipe europeo. Enfatizando los derechos de los propietarios legítimos y declarando que tales derechos son otorgados no por el rey sino por Dios, Waman Puma hace referencia a la noción de la ley natural, el concepto escolástico del derecho de todas las gentes a la soberanía en sus propias tierras. (Adorno 1987 xxv.)

Taking his cue from Las Casas, Guaman Poma insists that the Andeans are not subject to any Spanish government, whether de facto or rightful. The reasons he gives are the same ones expressed by Las Casas: the Andeans had usurped no Christian lands, nor had they done them any harm, they had not been subjugated at any
time by any European prince. Placing emphasis on legitimate ownership rights and declaring that such rights are passed out not by the king but by God, Guaman Poma refers to the notion of natural law, the academic concept of the sovereignty rights of all people to their native lands.

Even though he knew the Incas were a lost cause by 1615, Guaman Poma still looks back on them with respect, and if he blames Andean idolatry and witchcraft on them, it is only because he had to blame someone for losing the faith that his people must have had at the time of Noah. The Incas might as well take idolatry with them on their sinking ship, as it were. But he rarely questions their legitimate claim to the rule of the Andes, and when he does question it, he concludes that they were legitimate, be it because of their just laws or because of divine will. The Spanish, on the other hand, are interlopers with no business meddling in Indian affairs.

Guaman Poma’s strident defense of his people speaks volumes as to the way they had been previously characterized. In seeking to re-invent the history of the Andes, he brings into sharp relief the initial act of invention itself, as well as the negative character of this invention. Guaman Poma’s counter-invention never took hold in the New World or the old: there is no solid evidence to suggest that anyone even read it until centuries after it was written. Rather, it was the invention that he sought to counter that became the official version of things, laying the foundation for centuries of repression and exploitation.
What were Guaman Poma’s goals? He wanted to see a semi-independent Peru, one that had been returned to native rule under the supervision of the Spaniards. He wanted the Spanish out, and they could take the blacks and mestizos with them, as far as he was concerned. He outlined his plan on several occasions, and even answered imaginary questions that the king might put to him. But he knew that making this plan seem credible and feasible to the king was his most difficult task. There were many obstacles in his way.

These obstacles were considerable. He knew what Spanish historians had been writing about his people since the Toledan era in Peru: that the Indians had a history of poor self-rule, that the Inca had been unjust tyrants, and that the natives were probably descended from Jews and Moors. This was not considered a compliment. Also, the Spanish considered native record-keeping to be unreliable and possibly tainted by the Devil, who had been leading the Indians astray for centuries.

This image of his people was the invention of them that he needed to counter. If we briefly examine this, we will see that it was, in fact, an invention: first of all, historically, we know that the Incas were not any better or worse than the Hapsburgs, and in fact they accomplished many amazing things. They had ruled Peru for more than one hundred years, and Spain had invaded them with little provocation. There is no evidence today – and there was none in 1615 – that the Indians were in any way related to European Jews or African Moors.
Volumes have been written about Guaman Poma and his famous letter to the king. There are many aspects of his work that I have not touched upon in this dissertation. I prefer to focus on his demarginalization of native discourse, his appropriation of Spanish epistemology and his attempted transformation of what Walter Mignolo calls the colonial difference. Guaman Poma challenged the hegemonic Spanish right to invent his history and define him. The most famous question in post-colonialism – Can the subaltern speak? – is answered by Guaman Poma. He tried to make his voice heard, in the only way he knew how. It is telling that his letter was lost for centuries and probably never even seen by the king.

By countering the Spanish invention with one of his own, he brings into relief the invention itself. I have found Guaman Poma’s clear rebuttal of the origin/political history arguments put forth by previous writers to be the clearest evidence that these aspects of history had become tainted by politics and religion.

Post-colonialism is always interested in voices of resistance, and there is no clearer voice of resistance from the mid-colonial period of Latin America than Guaman Poma, unless it is El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega. (El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega was a contemporary of Guaman Poma, an educated Andean who lived in Spain for most of his life. He wrote many histories of the New World. Many post-colonial scholars have found resistance in his works, and many compare him to Guaman Poma. A detailed analysis of el Inca Garcilaso is out of the scope of this dissertation.) Therefore, I felt it was crucial to this study to include at least one of these writers. By seeking to invent ethno-historical associations of his own
and include the Andes in Christian history, Guaman Poma makes the Spanish strategies of subjugation stand out clearly. He fought fire with fire, and it is his perspective that makes this study possible.
CONCLUSION

What is racism and how does it work? Is it possible to go back into the past and identify a certain point in history at which two cultures or peoples in contact first began to discriminate against one another and why? In my dissertation, I believe I have shown a partial picture of exactly that: the birth of certain negative stereotypes about a certain set of people and cultures. The reasons for the birth of these stereotypes – repression, exploitation, and fear not only of New World natives but Jews, Muslims, and Protestants as well – are by no means noble, and present one more ugly side of colonialism, one little explored until this moment by post-colonial scholars.

In 1492, the Old World held no prejudices about the New World. They didn’t even know it was there. Within one hundred years, however, they had categorized all New World natives as liars, scoundrels, idolaters, cannibals, murderers, cowards and more. Why did that happen? I have partially answered that question in this dissertation by considering the Spanish reaction to the Incas and the Aztecs, the two most powerful New World civilizations.

Many of the stereotypes and negative associations made about New World culture were the result of the wars, violence, fear and misunderstanding
that took place in the early years of this bloody confrontation. Such negativity is inevitable in such an emotional, violent situation. But other stereotypes and associations were legitimized and officialized by Spanish historians who wrote lengthy and numerous books about the New World, its people and history.

At first, these books tried to capture and explain the history of the New World. These early efforts were often earnest and sincere, but generally deeply flawed and full of European historical notions, such as the search for the mythical Prester John or the presence of mermaids or giants. The early histories tended to characterize the New World natives as naive, brutish and savage, if occasionally noble.

Later historians wrote treatises and chronicles that were not nearly as innocent as the early ones. Pressured by reformers who saw the conquest and enslavement of millions as an abomination, these later writers sought to justify the horrors of the Spanish colonial enterprise and to assuage the conscience of the king of Spain as well as the common people. They had many answers for the reformers: some claimed that it was God’s will for the Spanish to go to the New World; others defended the conquest by listing the benefits for the New World population of forced conversions to Christianity.

Some writers, however, looked to the past to justify the present. The Indians, they said, were incapable of governing themselves, because before the Spanish arrived their rulers were tyrannical, unjust monsters, idolaters and warlocks, dupes of Satan himself. Before those tyrannical rulers, the New World natives labored under a system a scant step from total anarchy. The Spanish, they
argued, may be harsh masters but they were certainly a step up from the Incas and the Aztecs.

The apologists were not through. A long-running debate at the time questioned the ancestry of the New World natives. There were numerous theories, some of them more outlandish than others. Some even theorized that the Indians were descended from Swedes or French. By 1607, however, two of the most important and popular theories were that the Indians were descended from one of the biblical ten lost tribes of Israel and that they were descended from Carthaginians. Basically, the Spanish had reached the conclusion that the Indians were descended from Jews, North Africans or a combination of both. Is it a coincidence that around the same time, Jews and Muslims (from the Middle East and North Africa) were the two most feared and despised groups in Spain? I think not. By linking the Indians to the Jews and Muslims, the apologists of the conquest were justifying the continuing enslavement and occupation of the Americas. In this dissertation, I have studied the foundation for these arguments, placed them in their historical context, and examined the arguments themselves, in addition to relating how the reformers caused it all to start.

What is the relevance today? These men wrote their dusty tomes centuries ago. To propose that the New World natives are descended from lost Jews is ridiculous today, now that modern disciplines such as anthropology and archeology tell a far different story.

It is fair to question the relevance. Many have, in fact: history has pronounced judgment on these works, declaring them obsolete. One of the
cornerstones of my dissertation, Gregorio García’s *Origen de los Indios*, has been out of print since 1729. These writers and their theories have been thrown onto the trash heap of history, right next to models of the solar system that show the sun revolving around the earth and maps that show the world to be flat.

But with new ideas comes new interest in things long ignored. The post-colonial movement, which revisits colonial works and studies them not for the conclusions they reach but for what they can tell us about colonial reality with all of their flawed theories, has caused a renewed interest in some of these works. The post-colonialists believe that you can find answers in the past for many of the problems of the present. I have tried diligently to follow the lead of post-colonialists such as Edward Said, José Rabasa, and Walter Mignolo as I worked on this dissertation, applying their ideas to texts that time forgot.

And is this history really so far away? In 1572, people in Spain were concerned about reports of horrors taking place in the New World: massacres, enslavements, men being ripped apart by dogs, etc. Reformers were telling the world that Spain was doing horrible things in a land that had not attacked them or offended them in any way. The royal agent in Peru, Viceroy Toledo, sent a letter to the king of Spain, in which he informed the king that his occupation of the New World was completely legitimate, because the previous regime had been corrupt and tyrannical. In addition, it was Toledo’s conclusion that the king had done no wrong by divvying up the spoils of the New World to his faithful lieutenants: he was the ruler, and that was his prerogative.
In March 2003, the United States and a limited number of allies invaded Iraq, claiming that Iraq’s ruler, Saddam Hussein, was stockpiling forbidden weapons and attempting to buy material for a nuclear bomb. Before long, the United States and their allies occupied Iraq, and it became evident that there were no forbidden weapons and no reliable evidence to support the claim that Hussein was trying to buy nuclear material. The Bush administration changed their rhetoric, instead claiming that they had invaded because Hussein’s regime had been illegitimate, because it was corrupt and tyrannical. In addition, the administration defended their decision to give control of Iraq’s vast oil fields to the Halliburton corporation, a multi-billion dollar oil company with close ties to the Bush administration, on the grounds that since American interests had paid for the war, American interests should manage Iraq’s wealth.

Is 1572 really such a distant point in time?

A revision of the colonial era texts is useful for other reasons. I believe they can explain modern-day racism against the New World natives, for example. What is racism? Albert Memmi, who examined the subject in his 1982 book *Racism*, struggles greatly to come up with a definition of the word that he likes. He eventually defines it thus: “Racism is a generalizing definition and valuation of the differences, whether real or imaginary, to the advantage of the one defining and deploying them [accusateur], and to the detriment of the one subjected to that
act of definition [victim], whose purpose is to justify (social or physical) hostility and assault[agression].” (Memmi 100)

A useful definition to be sure, but a little bit vague. Perhaps of more use to the colonial scholar is another description he makes earlier, in which he describes the three foundations of racism:

Pure races exist, each distinct from the others, implying that meaningful biological differences exist between groups and the individuals that compose them.

Pure races are biologically superior to those that are not pure, and this superiority brings with is as well a psychological, social, cultural, and spiritual superiority.

These multiple superiorities both explain and legitimize the dominance and the privilege of the superior groups. (Memmi 5-6)

This definition of the three foundations of all racist thought is more useful for the colonial scholar, because in many cases it fully explains the mind set of the writer dealing with native-related topics. By adjusting the preceding three conditions for racism to fit the context of the Spanish colonial period, we see that the European intellectuals at the time believed first of all that they were significantly biologically different from the New World natives, not merely culturally. Second, they believed that the offspring of the two races was likewise tainted with the genes of the lesser of the races. Third, they believed that the
Spanish possessed natural, inborn characteristics that made them superior to the New World natives, and that the fact of these differences justified their conquest of and governance over these same natives. It didn’t help that the Spanish had just successfully carried out two racially-based purges in the Iberian Peninsula: the expulsion of the Jews and the re-conquest of Spain from the Moors. This successful persecution of the Jews and Moors seemed to convince the Spanish that they were, in fact, racially superior to other people.

Immediately after describing these three conditions for racism, Memmi proceeds to argue with them, easily proving that they are illogical and incorrect. But if we examine them, we once again find that one of them, at least, can probably be forgiven in the Spanish. In the early days after contact, the New World natives and the Spanish were probably as different as two ‘races’ in contact ever were. The two peoples had incredibly little in common: it would not suffice to say that they were as different as cats and dogs or apples and oranges: relatively speaking their two cultures in contact had as much in common as cats and oranges. The clash of cultures was shocking, and made worse by the great violence that erupted between the two warlike cultures almost immediately.

Additionally, to assert that there is, in fact, no biological difference between the Spanish and the New World natives is ridiculous. There were obvious differences of skin color, height, hair, etc. Perhaps, given the shock of contact, the obvious physical and cultural differences, and lingering animosities after a long and protracted war, the Spanish (and probably the Indians as well) can
be forgiven for assuming that there were much deeper biological differences between them. It would even follow that offspring might be suspect.

It is, in fact, Memmi’s third condition for racism that is most interesting to the modern colonial scholar. That there were differences were obvious. That early intellectuals and churchmen assumed that these differences ran more deeply (down, in fact, to the genetic level) than we today believe was forgivable. However, the cultural practices of domination and subjugation that grew from these beliefs in superiority led to the abuses of colonialism, and that is something more difficult to accept than mere misunderstanding. This particular point is one that goes deeply into colonial discourse, especially in the case of Spanish America. It is this sort of ‘helpful big brother’ racism that is often seen from that great colonizing institution, the church, and the belief that God had led Spain to the New World. Any given Spaniard might have deeply believed that the systems that they were installing in the New World (new writing systems, new economic systems, new means of travel, etc.) were of great benefit to the poor foolish “Indios.” But the religious man also felt that they were doing no less than saving the immortal souls of the New World natives from eternal damnation.

Memmi asserts that a colonizer must employ racism in order to justify the act of occupation. In the case of sixteenth-century Spain, their continued political success and Imperial actions depended on New World wealth: they could not afford to lose the colonies. Racism therefore became a necessary tool of empire.
Identifying racism, especially in a colonial context, should not be very difficult. In the New World, the Indians were subjected to all manner of degradation and abuse and barred from any meaningful input into their own destinies. Spotting the racism and understanding how it came into being are two different matters, however. Asserting that the Spanish came to the New World, enslaved the Indians without conscience, and took all they could is too simplistic. Certainly there were some conquistadores or colonial officials without remorse, but all of the Spaniards? It cannot be. Many of the Spanish were men of good conscience, who nevertheless allowed themselves to participate in the atrocities of the conquest or at least never spoke against them.

What role did racism play? Racism was the excuse, the justification for the colonial enterprise. If any particular Spaniard felt bad about the inhuman conditions of the mines at Potosi, he could always tell himself that the Indians were stupid brutes, men of a lesser order, who did not feel pain and did not suffer as he himself did. This justification was quite necessary for the perpetuation of the colonial order.

Because racism was so important for the establishment of the colonial system, it was necessary to formalize it. In other words, the rationale for the New World abuses taking place had to be established in some sort of formal way. In this dissertation, I have attempted to show one of the many ways in which this formalization took place – through the written word. Throughout this dissertation, I have shown time and again how the New World natives were described in print as naive, savage men with no legitimate form of government,
who were probably descended from races “known” to be degenerate. This is racism.

As easy as it is to find racism in the first half of the sixteenth century, it is harder to find it in the latter half. It became far more insidious. As I have endeavored to prove, racism wormed its way into the previously neutral space of a construction of a native history.

It also found its way into the question of origin. Indians could no longer be considered servants by birth, but they could be compared to Jews and Moors, who had no Las Casas to defend them. This process is one that I have termed ethno-historical association, or the comparison of one people or religion with another, with which there are actually no links. This was an ongoing process in the New World, only taken to its highest points by García, who claimed Israelite or Carthaginian ancestry for the new World natives. The proof of this process – along with the proof of its negative impact on the Americans – can be found in Guaman Poma, who refuted it and chose to compare his people to Romans and Greeks instead, although he did not claim Roman or Greek ancestry for the Andeans.

It is only through a counter-colonial reading of the works of the period that such facts and concepts reveal themselves. The texts in question did not ever intend for us to find the traces of colonial racism within: their aim was usually the conversion of the natives, which implies the destruction of native culture.

Literature, discourse, and politics have always gone hand-in-hand. It is nothing new to discover literature that influences policy or beliefs. Thanks to
post-colonial theories, however, we can now re-examine colonial works and find within them the seeds of racism and discrimination.

The racism of the New World has long outlived the circumstances that caused it. Philip II’s economic crisis ended long ago. Catholics and Protestants live together peacefully in the world, even in Spain. Jews practice their religion openly. The Spanish occupation of the New World began to end almost two hundred years ago, and was complete by 1898.

Yet still, native majorities in such countries as Ecuador, Guatemala and Bolivia still suffer, with little political or economic power in their homelands. Peru only recently elected its first indigenous president since the time of the Inca. Such countries are ruled by small, European-descended minorities. Racism is still part of everyday life.

At the heart of post-colonial studies is the notion that we can understand today by understanding yesterday. I believe that to be true. In this dissertation, I have attempted to shed some light on the process in which America was invented by those who needed to control it, and how that invention was questioned by those who had the most to lose.
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