COMMUNICATION AND THE SOCIAL HISTORY OF CONTACT IN THE
SPANISH ATLANTIC, 1341-1602

A Dissertation in
History

by
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When Columbus landed in the Bahamas in 1492, he brought local people aboard and "spoke" with them—or so he claims. Many of the Europeans who followed in his wake similarly claim to have "spoken" with the indigenous people they met. The questions that immediately occur to modern readers are all variations of "How?" How did the people of Guanahani speak to Columbus? How did the conquistadors of Puerto Rico learn the "secrets of the land" they were about to conquer? How did the Calusa of south Florida know to reject Spanish visitors before those visitors had even arrived? How did information flow in the absence of a shared language?

In this dissertation, I answer those basic questions, and describe how the struggle to communicate and gather information shaped the social landscapes of European and indigenous people in the Spanish Atlantic through the long sixteenth century. I argue that efforts to communicate, whether in the Canary Islands or Kansas, fell into broad, nearly universal patterns, centered around material exchange, gesture, performance, and kidnapping.

In telling this story, I also argue for a new kind of history of the early Americas, rooted in the story of a collective intellectual labor across the Spanish and indigenous Atlantic. By focusing on this common struggle, I make Curaçao, the Colorado River, and Tenochtitlan different stages for the performance of a common, connected drama. Rather than clashing civilizations, I tell the stories of individuals. I tell the history of the complex and contested Atlantic world that was, without undue deference to the colonial
world that would be. I am as concerned with the "useless islands" of the Bahamas as the Zocalo of Mexico City, as devoted to the "doomed" Taino as the enduring Zapotecs of Oaxaca.

The first chapter tells the story of contact in the Canary Islands, and demonstrates how indigenous islanders and visiting Europeans stumbled upon ways to communicate in the first contact frontier of the early modern Atlantic that would be repeated in the Americas. It also introduces the idea of the Long Contact, the decades of indigenous adaptation and reaction to repeated European visits that defined the experience of contact. The second chapter tells the stories of three Long Contacts in places that were never conquered by Spaniards, and how indigenous information networks responded to European presence. The following chapter examines the role of material exchange, hand signals, and body language as a surprisingly effective form of early contact communication. The next chapter examines the role of the indigenous slave trade in creating a corps of bilingual indigenous people who could be used as the first generation of translators. Finally, I turn to the trade in musical instruments and the use of music and nonverbal sound in contact situations.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES .................................................................................................................. viii

LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................... xi

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .......................................................................................................... xii

1 Introduction ......................................................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Definitions ....................................................................................................................... 4
  1.2 Sources ........................................................................................................................... 10
  1.3 Historiography, Influences, and Position within the Field ............................................ 12
  1.4 Organization ................................................................................................................... 21

2 Islands: A Pre-History of Contact in the Canary Islands, 1341-1496 .................... 24
  2.1 The Islands and Their Islanders ..................................................................................... 30
  2.2 Speaking as Italians, 1341 ............................................................................................. 35
    2.2.1 Recco’s First Account ............................................................................................... 38
    2.2.2 Recco’s Second Account and the Birth of Sensory Interrogation ......................... 41
  2.3 Kidnapping, Conversion, Catalans, and the Virgins of Candelaria .................................. 43
  2.4 A Seaside Discussion of the Trinity, Christian Ethics, and the 15th Century Petroleum Industry, 1404 ................................................................................................................................. 58
  2.5 The Retrieval System and Canary Islander Mobility ..................................................... 61
  2.6 French Dancing and Canarian Laments ......................................................................... 65
  2.7 Conclusion ......................................................................................................................... 67

3 Rumors: “The Long Contact” and Indigenous Conversations about European Presence ................................................................................................................................. 70
  3.1 Rumors: The Bahamas and South Florida, 1492-1570 ................................................. 73
  3.2 Madalena’s World ............................................................................................................ 78
    3.2.1 The Coming of the “Malas Cosas” ............................................................................ 78
  3.3 Miguel’s World ................................................................................................................ 86
    3.3.1 Arrival, part I: Hernando de Soto and Francisco Vázquez de Coronado .................. 91
    3.3.2 Arrival, pt. 2 ............................................................................................................. 95
3.4 Conclusion ................................................................................................................................. 99

4 Signals: Objects and Signed Communication at the Dawn of Contact ........................................ 101
   4.1 Puerto Rico, 1507-1513 ........................................................................................................ 106
   4.2 The Southwest, 1540 ............................................................................................................ 115
      4.2.1 Developing an Analytical System for Nonverbal Communication ................................ 117
      4.2.2 Thursday, August 26, 1540. The Mouth of the Colorado ............................................. 120
      4.2.3 Friday, August 27, 1540. 18 miles up the Colorado River ............................................ 120
      4.2.4 Saturday, August 28. An unknown distance up the Colorado River ............................... 130
      4.2.5 Lessons of the Alarcón Expedition, or Getting on Board with Kinetic Communication .......................................................... 135
   4.3 Tampa Bay, 1500-1549 ........................................................................................................ 136
      4.3.1 Signals on the Beach ...................................................................................................... 143
      4.3.2 One week in summer, Tampa Bay, 1549 ....................................................................... 144
      4.3.3 Cáncer’s Manifesto ........................................................................................................ 146
      4.3.4 The Tocobaga Story ....................................................................................................... 147
   4.4 Life in Mexico City: Miguel and the Ultimate Sensory Interrogation ................................... 149

5 People: The Trade in Indigenous Bodies and Bilingual Minds .................................................. 154
   5.1 Fear and Loathing in Central Florida: The Captivities of Two Spaniards and Four Tocobaga ........................................................................................................ 157
      5.1.1 Taken: Madalena’s Story, part II .................................................................................... 158
      5.1.2 In the Governor’s House ............................................................................................... 162
      5.1.3 Adrift in the Atlantic .................................................................................................... 169
      5.1.4 Madalena, La Lengua ................................................................................................... 175
   5.2 Part II: Bilingual Individuals in the Circum-Caribbean .......................................................... 180
   5.3 The Slave Trade and Indigenous Lenguas, 1492-1550 ....................................................... 185
      5.3.1 Reunion and Ruination in the Arawakan Caribbean .................................................... 186
      5.3.2 The Retrieval System and the Second Wave of Indigenous Slavery ............................... 195
      5.3.3 Global Indios ............................................................................................................... 200
   5.4 Conclusion .............................................................................................................................. 203
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sounds: Instruments, Soundscapes, and the Indigenous Encounter with European Musical Culture</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.1 Music as a Contact Genre</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.2 Music at Contact</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.2.1 Jingle Bells, or the Sound of Colonialism</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.2.2 Indigenous Bell Culture and the Success of the Cascabel as a Trade Item</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.2.3 For Whom the Bell Tolls: The Imposition of European Bell Culture in the Americas and the Changing Indigenous Soundscape</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.4 Mission Creep: Missions, Churches, and the Propagation of European Music in Indigenous Communities</td>
<td>226</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6.5 Conclusion</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.1 Manaytique and the story of Luisa Meléndez, Appalachian Exile</td>
<td>235</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.2 The Last Signals in Mesoamerica</td>
<td>240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7.3 Conclusion</td>
<td>246</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Epilogue: Oh Death, Where is Thy Sting</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Printed and Secondary Sources</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Archival Sources</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: A timeline of stages of contact

Figure 2.1: The Canary Islands

Figure 2.2: Costume and appearance of indigenous people from Gran Canaria, La Gomera, and El Hierro, respectively.

Figure 2.3: Mature dragon's blood tree in San Cristóbal de La Laguna, Tenerife. Photo by the author

Figure 2.4: Detail from the Capilla de Nuestra Señora de Candelaria depicting the statue's arrival among the Guanche, Anonymous, 1752. Note that it combines the Guanche's failed attack with her later adoration.

Figure 2.5: Virgen de Candelaria, Cristóbal Hernández de Quintana (1651-1725)

Figure 2.6: Virgin of Lluc, Mallorca

Figure 2.7: Comparison of contemporary statues of the Virgin and Child.

Figure 2.8: A man blows a trumpet on board one of Bethencourt's ships. Le Canarien: ms. Egerton 2709

Figure 3.1: Iñupiaq bow, Alaska, mid-19th century

Figure 3.2: Above: Cantino Planisphere of 1502. Below: Detail from the Waldseemuller map

Figure 3.3: Map of the Gulf of Mexico, 1524

Figure 3.5: Modified version of Miguel's map, AGI, MP-Mexico 50. The map has been simplified and re-oriented so that north is at the top.

Figure 4.1: A model of perception and cognition, from Diego Valadés’ Rhetorica Christiana

Figure 4.2: Taíno ear spike from the Caguana Ceremonial Ball Courts Site, Caguana, Puerto Rico (2nd from left)

Figure 4.3: Detail from a painting in the Boxer Codex depicting Mariana Islanders trading fresh food for iron goods. The other portion of the panel depicts islanders diving for pieces of iron dropped from the rear of the ship.
Figure 4.3: Detail from a painting in the Boxer Codex depicting Mariana Islanders trading fresh food for iron goods.................................................................115

Figure 4.4: Extent of the Safety Harbor Culture..........................................................138

Figure 4.5: Engraved whelk shell pendant depicting a bird man wearing a similar pendant. Craig Mound, Oklahoma. .................................................................139

Figure 4.6: Anclote Key, a likely Cáncer campsite and a representative example of the low-lying coast of the Tampa Bay area. Photo by the author .................145

Figure 4.7: AGI, MP-Mexico-50..................................................................................151

Figure 5.1: AGI, MP-SANTO_DOMINGO,4. A 1567 map of the village of La Habana .................................................................................................................166

Figure 6.1: Image from the original manuscript of the *Varias Coplas* from the Newberry Library, Chicago. Photo by the author ..............................................210

Figure 6.2: Above: Cascabeles from Guerrero, Codex Mendoza. Below: Similar bells recovered in Mexico State, 1350-1521. Held in the Field Museum, Chicago........................................................................................................212

Figure 6.3: Clarksdale-type (16th C.) Cascabeles from St. Marks Cemetery Site, Florida..................................................................................................................216

Figure 6.4: AGI, MP-Florida_Luisiana-3 depicting San Agustin de la Florida in 1593. Below: Detail depicting the settlement’s bell tower.................................218

Figure 6.5: Detail from an idealized Mesoamerican mission in Diego Valadés' *Rhetorica Christiana*.................................................................227

Figure 6.6: Hymn in the *Doctrina en Lengua Misteca* of 1571.................................228

Figure 6.7: Maya-style profile doodle from the Guatemala Music Manuscripts, Lily Library.....................................................................................................231

Figure 6.8: Left: Sample capital from “Madrigal part-books from 16th-century Italy,” Newberry Library. Middle and Right: Volute-style capitals from the Guatemala Music Manuscripts, Lily Library.................................232

Figure 6.9: Left: Imitation print capital from the Guatemala Music Manuscript. Right: Imitation print frontispiece in Pokonchi text.............................................233

Figure 7.1: Current site of Saltville/Manaytique, as seen across the salt marsh. Photo by the author.................................................................236
Figure 7.4: Depiction of religious instruction in Diego Valadés’ “Rhetorica Christiana” of visual aids in the use. .................................................................241

Figure 7.6: Anonymous Dutch Woodcut. *The Hand as the Mirror of Salvation*, 1466. Held at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C. .............................243

Figure 7.7: The Cardinal Virtues, showing the hand mnemonic from the perspective of the presenter and audience. .................................................................245
LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1: Economic Inequality on a Portuguese Trading Ship ..................................108
Table 4.2: Contents of the ship ..................................................................................110
Table 5.1: The Retrieval System in the Southern Caribbean, 1522-1550 ....................199
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1 Introduction

Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the Lord scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. Therefore is the name of it called Babel; because the Lord did there confound the language of all the earth: and from thence did the Lord scatter them abroad upon the face of all the earth.

Genesis 11:7-9

Imagine the moment of first contact between two groups of people who do not share a common language, and who, until that moment, were unaware of the existence each other. Perhaps you imagine Columbus among the Lucayans of the Bahamas in 1492, or Cortés meeting Moctezuma in 1519. Perhaps, if you are of a certain age or inclination, you picture Captain Picard slowly learning how to communicate with an alien by a campfire, learning the meaning behind “Darmok and Jalad at Tanagra.”¹ Perhaps you picture Amy Adams in Arrival. This experience is now so far removed from our own lives that it occurs to us more as a premise for science fiction, but it defined the Atlantic world from the 14th through the 18th centuries. When the Lucayans paddled out to Columbus, when Giovanni del Tegghia de Corbizzi landed on the Canary Island of Lanzarote, when Cortés met Moctezuma, two things happened: they (somehow) spoke, and they founded a new Babel.

¹ Star Trek: The Next Generation. "Darmok." Season 5, episode 2. Directed by Winrich Kolbe. Written by Philip LaZebnik and Joe Menosky. Syndicated, September 30, 1991. This episode is a vivid depiction of the emergence of spoken communication in a first contact situation. I thought of this image often when I first encountered the difficulties of communication in Spanish contact narratives.
This dissertation tells the story of that “speaking;” of the gifts, hand signals, kidnappings, interpreters, songs, rumors, and shipwreck survivors that made that “speaking” possible. If Babel is the metaphorical place where differences of language confound and separate groups of people, this is the social history of Babel, and of the rise—and sometimes fall—of the linguistic barriers that defined that place. While Babels arose across the Atlantic world, this dissertation focuses on their earliest and loftiest heights in the Spanish Atlantic, beginning with first contact in the Canary Islands in the early fourteenth century and ending at the waning years of the initial boom of Spanish expansion around 1600.

In telling the story of that space and of that speaking, I make two main arguments. The first is that wherever we may look in Babel, whoever may be doing the speaking, and whoever they spoke to, these attempts at communication fall into the same broad, almost universal patterns. Despite the incredible diversity of indigenous people encountered in this dissertation, and the relative diversity of Europeans, they all responded to the problem of Babel in similar ways, and their levels of ability were largely the same. Europeans had more chances to iterate and elaborate on patterns they had learned elsewhere, but they were no more innately talented than the indigenous people they encountered even with this head start. In fact, the majority of translators we will encounter in the later stages of this dissertation were themselves indigenous, meaning that most European communicative prowess consisted of stolen indigenous talent.

I also argue for a new kind of history of the early Americas focused on the story of a collective intellectual project across the Spanish and indigenous Atlantic. By focusing on the common struggle of an entire region, I level the distinctions not only
between Europeans and indigenous people, but also between future centers of Spanish imperial power and supposed backwaters or places of one-off contact. I am allowed to tell the story of the chaotic world that was, unhindered by visions of the post-contact world that would be. Canoe pilots of Curaçao were citizens of Babel just as much as Moctezuma. The “useless islands” of the Bahamas were as much a precinct of Babel as the mines of Potosí. If the Taíno, the Tocobaga, the Guanche, or any other group would eventually suffer demographic collapse, they were Babylonians in equal standing for decades, and their interactions were as formative to the Spanish experience as any other. We are allowed to contemplate indigenous spaces before epidemic, before demographic collapse, and those that were never conquered. The contacts between indigenous people spurred by the tumult of this era are of equal interest as contacts between Europeans and indigenous people.²

I call this new genre in the history of the early Americas contact history. Contact history is defined in opposition to conquest history, which rushes forward to the supposed “end” of the story of encounter. Conquest history, even in its best, most thoughtful, most indigenous-focused versions, reverts to the same brief account of the destruction of the Indies, narrating battles won and the cultural consequences thereof. Alternately, conquest history rushes forward to the establishment of stable colonial institutions: to sugar plantations, mines, viceroyalties and empires. If specialists in the history of the early Americas may give some attention to contact, narratives of the early Americas presented

to the public do not. One popular world history textbook renders the history of the entire sixteenth century in the Americas over the course of three pages, the highlight of which is a section called “The Great Dying.” Conquest history is a narrow history of a few colonial metropoles after decisive battles, while contact history is the history of most of the people and places in the Americas.

1.1 Definitions

Before we continue, it is helpful to pause and consider the questions of precisely what, where, and when Babel is. Babel is the condition of early contact zones where language difference makes it difficult or impossible for two or more groups of people to verbally communicate, before the advent of widespread bilingualism. I confine my analysis of Babel to two regions: the Canary Islands, and the area I refer to as the “American Mediterranean.” Europeans experienced their first “First Contact” situation of the late Middle Ages there, the oldest precinct of Babel. Given that each of the seven island dialects were mutually unintelligible; that they were visited and conquered by a wide

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4 I modeled Babel on Richard White’s middle ground and Nancy Van Deusen’s concept of the indioscape, both of which are a confluence of time, space, and social circumstance. White describe the Middle ground as a confluence of a metaphorical middle ground, where each side seeks to justify their actions in terms of what they imagine to be the discourse of the other side, and a literal space where state and non-state regimes met in relative equality. See Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815 (Twentieth Anniversary Edition)* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), XII-III. Van Deusen’s concept of the indioscape is her way of talking about the connections of indigenous slaves to their home and exilic communities, and the trajectory imposed on their lives by the institution of slavery. Van Deusen also uses the term to further her analysis, arguing that the presence of indio slaves helped create the collective identity of indio. While White’s middle ground is seemingly closer to the subject of this dissertation, I drew more from van Deusen’s presentation of a wide historical stage for a common drama. See Nancy van Deusen, *Global Indios: The Indigenous Struggle for Justice in Sixteenth-Century New Spain* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 12-3.
variety of Europeans; and that practices invented there were carried forth into the Spanish world, it is a fitting place to start this story.

The second region is what I have called, following the example of 19th century geographer Élisée Reclus, the American Mediterranean. The American Mediterranean consists of the lands facing the Caribbean and Gulf of Mexico. Like Fernand Braudel’s Mediterranean, the analytical space of the American Mediterranean is a world of wide cultural margins. Where Braudel’s Mediterranean includes all the regions drawn into its orbit by trade, diplomacy, and war, my American Mediterranean is defined by the scope of Spanish exploration. If Spaniards from Mexico City went to central Kansas or Baja California, or if Spaniards from Venezuela went into Amazonia, those regions became a part of the American Mediterranean. So too were the farther flung regions to where news of Spanish presence travelled via indigenous communication networks. While I recognize the unfortunate Eurocentrism of this definition, I am dependent on Spanish presence and the resultant Spanish documents to describe the effects of contact. The boroughs of Babel stretched far beyond these two regions, south through the Andes to Tierra del Fuego, west across the Pacific to the Philippines, and through the drainage of the La Plata river. The work of describing this process in those regions remains to be done and will doubtless improve the accuracy of our history of Babel. However, if the Mediterranean was a “sea within the measure of man,” the American Mediterranean is within the grasp of this

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researcher, both in terms of training and ambition. Moreover, it is a region within the measure of many Spaniards’ lives, the stage upon which most of the first generations of conquistadors learned and plied their trade and made their lives. As a result of this pattern of Spanish biography, it was also the sea and region that the first generations of indigenous slaves moved through.

In terms of when Babel was, it begins with contact and ends with the emergence of widespread bilingualism. I have envisioned this progression as a series of defined steps, depicted in figure 1.1 below.

![Four Stages of Contact](image)

Figure 1.1: A timeline of stages of contact

- **Awareness** – Either through rumor or fleeting contact, one group is aware of another. This may include contact, but not on a permanent basis.
- **Interaction** – No significant progress has been made in bridging the language gap, but both groups are interacting through non-verbal means, usually trade and signed communication.
- **Acquisition** – Individuals acquire the ability to communicate bilingually. More often than not, this involves acquisition of members of one group by another, via capture or accident.
- **Diffusion** – The extensive adoption of language, technology, knowledge, or religious practices of one group by another as a result of extended contact.

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7 I originally encountered the phrase in Ibid., vol. I, 355.
8 For an instructive example, consult the brief biography of Juan Garrido, a black conquistador in the Caribbean, Florida, and Mexico, in Matthew Restall, *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 55. This observation applies equally to the ubiquitous indigenous slaves that defined this period.
This progression is not fore-ordained. Like a subway line, it is possible to get off at any stage along the way, thus exiting the Spanish orbit. However, by the time a region reaches the stage of diffusion, Babel has begun to fade and give way to more traditional notion of cultural change. I would argue, however, that diffusion was slow to come. Echoing Matthew Restall’s myths of completion and of native desolation, the areas supposedly conquered by Spaniards were only subjugated in the most cursory of ways, and indigenous populations long presumed extinct still somehow persist, at least in the places covered by this dissertation.9

I do not believe that this schema supersedes any previous model of cultural change, but I would argue that it improves them by increasing the levels of analytical granularity in the early stages of cultural change. Few indigenous cultures have escaped the eventual tide of transculturation proposed by Fernando Ortiz, but this timeline allows us to take the time before that supposedly inevitable process more seriously.10 Most analytical frameworks for cultural change, including transculturation, were conceived of as long-term explanations for cultural changes in the Caribbean or central Mexico, while this one applies equally to all indigenous cultures and all contact frontiers.11 This model

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9 Ibid., 64-76 and 100-30.
10 In his book *Cuban Counterpoint: Tobacco and Sugar*, Ortiz proposes the term transculturation for the cultural disruptions experienced by the indigenous, African, and European peoples of Cuba. As opposed to acculturation, where one group moves towards the cultural practices and beliefs, transculturation is defined by three forms of change. One is acquisition, or the shift towards colonial norms that defines acculturation, but transculturation also acknowledges the simultaneous loss or uprooting of previous tradition and the eventual formation of a new entity as a result of the blending of the constituent parts. For a translation of his original text, see *Cuban Counterpoint*, trans. Harriet de Onís (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1947), 97-103.
11 I am thinking specifically of James Lockhart’s multistage theory of Double Mistaken Identity, a similar three-stage theory of contact also proposed by Lockhart, Miguel Leon Portilla’s idea of nepantlism, and Todorov’s Discovery-Conquest-Love-Knowledge progression. For Lockhart’s ideas, see “Double Mistaken Identity: Some Nahua Concepts in Postconquest Guise” and “Three experiences of Culture Contact: Nahua,
emphasizes the importance of contact over the inevitability of conquest, while also acknowledging the wide continuum of experiences across Babel.

The last and most vexatious thing to define is communication itself. For the purposes of this dissertation, communication is the production, reception, and propagation of social signals, whether intentionally or unintentionally made. I leave the boundaries of social signal intentionally open and vague, because this dissertation considers such a wide array of them. A gift is as much a social signal as a speech; a song as much a signal as a dance; a gesture as much a signal as a map. If an indigenous crowd fled at the sight of a Spaniard, and the Spaniard read a long Castilian legal text about submission to the king of Spain, both communicated. The indigenous crowd, by communicating in the language of human action, spoke much more directly. The indigenous group spoke no words, but conveyed that “we do not wish to have dealings with you” and possibly “we did not enjoy our previous encounter with your rapacious slavers.” The reader of the text of the Requerimiento (the name of that infamous text of legal claim) said a great deal of unintelligible legalese, but transferred far less meaning.¹²

Part of the reason for the openness of this definition of signaling is the importance I place on the signaling capacities of physical objects, such as gifts and trade goods. If an Arawakan woman from Trinidad received a handful of small sleigh bells as a gift from

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visiting Europeans, she received them as a signal of hospitality. As she danced while wearing them, their clear ringing materially changed the soundscape of the event, and signaled to their neighbors that the people of Trinidad not only had access to new trading partners, but a new kind of trading partner that had access to new technology. As those bells were traded on to the mainland or to another island, they carried with them the message that there was a new kind of people operating in the southern Caribbean. One Spanish gift created an outward-rippling series of social signals that far outpaced the actual presence of Spanish visitors. Trade goods were a social signal wherever they went, and as archaeologists dig them up, they are now effective proxies for the spread of information about Spaniards that we can now trace, like weather balloons for the information currents of the Americas.¹³

¹³ I have chosen, for the time being, to sidestep the intellectual tradition of communication studies, which is primarily quantitative in its methodology and mostly concerned with mass, mediated communication. Despite the existence of the printing press during the sixteenth century, periodicals and their mass audiences were still several centuries away. As this project reaches greater levels of complexity, I will draw in the subfield of interpersonal communication studies. This subfield is primarily concerned with theoretical models for the finer nuances of social interaction, such as the maintenance of friendships or the way conversationalists adapt to one another. As the project stands, and, frankly, as the sources allow, I am still primarily concerned with untangling the actual logistics of communication. In my section on nonverbal and signed communication, I also need to reckon with the field of sign language studies. For a historiography of communications studies, see Peter Simonson and John Durham Peters, “Communication and Media Studies, History to 1968” The International Encyclopedia of Communication https://doi-org.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/10.1002/9781405186407.wbiecc087.pub2 (December 2015) (accessed July 1, 2018) and Peter Simonson, “Communication and Media Studies, History since 1968” The International Encyclopedia of Communication (December 2015) https://doi-org.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/10.1002/9781405186407.wbiecc086.pub3 (Accessed July 1, 2018). For an overview of the subfield of interpersonal communication, see Charles R. Berger, “Interpersonal Communication” The International Encyclopedia of Communication (February 2010) https://doi-org.ezaccess.libraries.psu.edu/10.1002/9781405186407.wbieci077 Accessed July 1, 2018.
1.2 Sources

In writing this dissertation, I drew primarily on manuscript sources held in Spain’s *Archivo General de Indias* (AGI), the archive that holds the majority of Spain’s colonial documentation. Most of these sources are digitized and available via the PARES, Spain’s clearinghouse for digitized archival records. I consulted some of these sources in person over the course of two trips to Spain. I have also drawn on sources from Spain’s *Archivo General de Simancas* (AGS), which is primarily tasked with preserving royal and military records. The AGS holds some of the earliest sources concerning the Canary Islands and the very early years of Spain’s colonial presence in the Caribbean. I also drew on manuscripts held in research libraries across the United States, and in one case, a provincial archive in the Canary Islands.

I also drew heavily on contemporary printed sources, particularly from the collections of the John Carter Brown Library. These include classics like the works of Bartolomé de Las Casas and Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo, as well as more esoteric sources like indigenous-language religious texts and Italian compilations of contact narratives. When working on the southern half of what is now the United States, I have benefitted greatly from the work of previous historians in compiling and transcribing early contact narratives for edited volumes. I have supplemented these with descriptions of archaeological work conducted in these regions. More work remains to be done in local archives, particularly in Mexico and Colombia, where early records still survive.\(^{14}\)

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\(^{14}\) I began this project as an investigation into the communications strategies of early missionaries. As part of that earlier project, I looked at ecclesiastical sources in several archives in Mexico, most importantly the Archivo General de La Nación. There, at the AGI, and at several church archives in Rome, I was
While the early collections of the AGI have a wide array of sources, my hope is that these local archives will provide less anecdotal and more long-term insights into local phenomena.

In trying to find the most helpful examples of communication in contact situations, I have tended to favor a certain kind of encounter narrative that features vivid description and long-term social engagement, as opposed to accounts of violence or formulaic reports. This is why, for example, I favor Luis Cáncer’s personal diary of his doomed Florida mission over the battle narratives produced by Hernando de Soto, or the meandering Colorado River journey of Hernando de Alarcón over the skirmishes of the Oñate expedition. These kinds of sources are the exception rather than the rule, and my reliance on them runs the danger of covering the violence of encounter and the violent aims of would-be conquistadors like Alarcón. I do not wish to whitewash the black deeds of slavers, whose sins dominate later chapters of this dissertation, nor praise the social skills of massacre perpetrators. The treatment of the Lucayans, discussed in chapter 3, is as dark a presentation of Spanish rapacity as can be found, and was done with the full

15 I thank Peter Mancall, who pointed out this potential problem during a Borderlands workshop at the Huntington Library.

16 These arguments, of unique Spanish cruelty and rapacity in conquest, or of unique colonial benevolence, are referred to the Black and White Legends, respectively. For a brief synopsis, see Matthew Restall and Kris Lane, *Latin America in Colonial Times* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 61-2. While the Black Legend began with the polemic works of Bartolomé de Las Casas and Spain’s imperial rivals, the origins of the modern historiographical debate between these dueling legends can be found in a series of opposing articles by Benjamin Keen and Lewis Hanke in the late 1960s and early 1970s in the *Hispanic American Historical Review*. See Keen’s article "The White Legend Revisited: A Reply to Professor Hanke’s ‘Modest Proposal’," *The Hispanic American Historical Review* 51:2 (1971): 336-55. For a more recent, in-depth analysis of the Black Legend, see María José Vallaverde Rico and Francisco Castilla Urbano, eds., *La Sombra de La Leyenda Negra* (Madrid: Editorial Tecnos, 2016).
approval of the supposedly paternalistic Spanish royalty. I do believe that the history of Babel is an important and largely untold chapter in what we call the Conquest, and that the history of Babel privileges a wide array of indigenous people in a way other stories cannot. It acknowledges the truth that many indigenous people escaped colonialism for decades or centuries after they received Spanish visitors. I also believe, especially in the case of Alarcón, that the strength of these sources allows for methodological insights that help us make better use of the sources that emphasize the nasty, brutish, and short nature of encounter. In addition, I have tried to make use of non-narrative sources such as dictionaries, financial records, and the findings of archeological digs, which provide a practical counternarrative to the rhetorical aims of my Spanish sources.

1.3 Historiography, Influences, and Position within the Field

I am not the first to study communication in the early Americas. The scholars who created the New Philology brought intense analysis of indigenous languages into the mainstream of Mesoamerican history beginning as early as the 1970s. Their work has led to an efflorescence of intensely local scholarship on indigenous cultures beginning with their own words.17 Scholars of colonial North America have been actively interested in communication for at least three decades, with the real inflection point beginning around the turn of the millennium.18 One thing that unites both Latin American and North

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18 For an introduction to this historiography, see Alejandra Dubcovsky, “Communication in Colonial North America,” *History Compass* 15:9 (2017): 1-10. The John Carter Brown Library hosted a conference on
American scholarship is the urge to refute arguments about communication by Tzvetan Todorov in his book *The Conquest of America: The Question of the Other*. Todorov argues that alphabetic literacy, and the European scholarly tradition it enabled, made Europeans “incontestably superior to the Indians in the realm of interhuman communication.” As with many scholars before me, I disagree. As we will see, I have found no evidence of this supposed innate superiority. To the extent that Europeans had an advantage, I would argue that it had more to do with practice than ability, and that European experiences in the Canary Islands and Africa gave Europeans a head start on these communication skills. Indigenous people were hardly overawed, especially after they had experienced multiple encounters with Europeans.

I would argue that this project differs from earlier studies of communication in two key ways: a focus on geographical breadth over local depth, and a broader conception of the means of communicating. Scholarship in the New Philology has been intensely local, rooted in the village or the language group. North American scholars of communication, despite the lack of indigenous-language sources, have focused intensely

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20 Ibid., 97. This is also the quote employed by Dubcovsky in her summation of Todorov. See Dubcovsky, “Communication,” 2.

on the story of a particular group or region. Because of this local focus, these stories also have a distinct narrative rhythm to them, beginning with contact and ending centuries later at some distant point, following the long journey of the relevant people towards a more colonial or European existence. I do not intend this project as a rebuke to this kind of work, but I felt that it was time for the pendulum to swing in the opposite direction, to tell the story of the collective journey made by many people together, rather than one group on their own.

The scholars of the New Philology have placed an emphasis on verbal forms of communication and have relied in large part on written indigenous sources from after the diffusion stage of contact. I am interested in a wider variety of methods and in an earlier era. Art historians fluent in the New Philology or interested in similar questions have started the work I continue here, particularly in their interest in alternative literacies.22 I have also been influenced by Céline Carayon’s work on nonverbal communication in the French Atlantic and Paul A. Scolieri’s work on indigenous dance in the conquest, although their work is more specialized than mine.23

Despite the superficial closeness between my interest and those of the New Philologists, I have drawn more inspiration from studies of communication networks and

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from what Matthew Restall has dubbed the New Conquest History. In part this is due to a formative personal experience. When I was a graduate student at the University of North Florida, I took a seminar led by Denice Fett on Renaissance Diplomacy. Fett was a student of political and military historian Geoffrey Parker and worked on Renaissance European information networks and spy craft. It was my first introduction to the idea, articulated beautifully by Alejandra Dubcovsky, that:

“Communication itself is not a historical act, because peoples in all times and places have communicated. Even so, peoples’ relationship to information—to what mattered, to who spread and acquired news, and to how those exchanges unfolded and changed—has a history.”

It was in that class that I read Filippo de Vivo’s 2007 book *Information and Communication in Venice: Rethinking Early Modern Politics*, which reimagines the political life of the city of Venice around the communication of its citizens, ranging from the patrons of a barbershop to the doge. Although wildly different in its aims and region, it was this book, more than any other, that made this project seem viable and informed what a communication history could be. It was his work that showed me how the perspective of communication could expand historical narratives to encompass larger and more diverse swathes of society. We also read Fernand Braudel’s *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, a clear ancestor of de Vivo’s

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25 Before I developed my own definition of communication, I relied on this formulation by de Vivo: "I stress communication as well as the information which was its content, so as to include media as well as messages, the activity as well as the object of exchange, and the people it involved as producers, receivers, or intermediaries. See *Information and Communication in Venice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 2-3.
Braudel’s sense of the simultaneously haphazard and consequential diffusion of information, goods, and people across a unified maritime frontier influenced this project in ways I only recognized in hindsight.

As my quote of Dubcovsky above would indicate, while at Penn State I have since found more works by authors interested in the flow of information, but whose interests lie outside of Europe. At a small conference held in State college, I met Alejandra Dubcovsky, whose book *Informed Power: Communication in the Early American South*, as well as some materials in her dissertation, brought a similar approach to the colonial Southeast. Her work deals with the intersection of indigenous information networks and the geopolitics of the early colonial south. Since this dissertation is mostly set in the early decades of her project, more focused on Latin America, and deals with more elementary aspects of communication, I have come to see our projects as more complementary than at odds. Still, we tread many of the same paths, and her information, as well as her personal assistance, has been a welcome addition and correction to my research.

As a result of my coursework on the early modern world, I encountered Luke Clossey’s *Salvation and Globalization in the Early Jesuit Missions*, a history of the spread of the early Jesuit order in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Clossey traces

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26 I was particularly influenced by Braudel’s discussion of the way time and distance impeded communication, including his concentric ring maps of average postal time across the Mediterranean, and his willingness to think about communication as an ongoing project affecting the political fortunes of a region. See Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean and the Mediterranean World in the Age of Philip II*, vol. 1 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 355-87.


the development of Jesuit information networks, and through them, the development of a corporate body of knowledge. In an earlier version of my project, one focused on religious communication in the early Americas, it was a template for envisioning the spread of approaches to communication among the clergy. While that incarnation of this project fell by the wayside, looking for the emergence of that institutional knowledge among early Spanish visitors at large was a key impetus to this project.

In a separate class on Asian borderlands, I first read Erik Mueggler’s *The Paper Road: Archive and Experience in the Botanical Exploration of West China and Tibet*. *The Paper Road* is a much narrower history than Clossey’s, but deals with the same themes of the emergence of specialist knowledge. Mueggler shows—by contrasting local religious texts, local histories, and botanical reports in English archives—how indigenous religious beliefs influenced Naxi ideas about their surrounding landscape, and how these ideas in turn shaped western botanical knowledge. Mueggler provides a compelling model for how the knowledge and aid of indigenous informants shapes scientific and anthropological discourse, often despite the prejudices of the European intellectuals ostensibly conducting the research. It is also simply a joy to read, filled with vivid and beautiful prose.

In terms of “schools” of Latin American history, this dissertation most closely hews to the vision of the New Conquest History laid out by Matthew Restall. In his article of the same title, Restall argues that this school of historical scholarship aims to

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30 Though well outside the region of the New Conquest History, Mueggler’s ideas on intermediacy would fit well with New Conquest History works on the subject.
challenge traditional conquest studies by stressing the role of indigenous people in shaping outcomes, seeking new protagonists, and pushing the geographic boundaries of conquest studies. While I did not set out to conform to any particular school of historical analysis in writing this dissertation, my intellectual interests and the sources themselves led me to the same broad approaches. In turn, books in this tradition were major inspirations for this project, especially if we expand the breadth of that canon to include the Americas and Atlantic world as a whole.

Restall was not the first author to work in this tradition, as he himself argues, but his *Seven Myths of the Spanish Conquest* is a seminal text, especially for this project. In *Seven Myths*, Restall identifies seven primary flaws in public perceptions of the Spanish Conquest of the Americas, chipping away at notions of European superiority, indigenous inferiority and annihilation, and others. Like this project, Restall also draws on examples from across the Americas. Chapter 5, “The Lost Words of La Malinche: The Myth of (Mis) Communication” is the most direct antecedent to this project. Babel is a creation of my own, but it resembles the world presented by *Seven Myths*.32

I have followed in the footsteps of the New Conquest History in my search for new protagonists and in pushing geographic boundaries. I found the inspiration for my protagonists Madalena and Miguel in a category of work I would classify as open,

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speculative, and feminist micro-histories of contact, including Camilla Townsend’s biography of Malintzin (the translator of Cortés), Frances Karttunen’s biographies of intermediaries, and Allan Greer’s work on the Quebecois Mohawk convert Catherine Tekakwitha. Nancy van Deusen’s work on indigenous slavery, particularly her biographical and social material in *Global Indios*, is also a direct inspiration for biographies. Alida Metcalf’s *Go-Betweens and the Colonization of Brazil, 1500-1600*, puts “go-betweens” of all forms at the center of the first century of Brazilian history, in addition to providing a valuable introduction to Portuguese contact practices developed in Africa. I also owe a great debt to the style of Elizabeth Fenn’s *Encounters at the Heart to the World: A History of the Mandan People*. Though I began my discussion of Madalena’s home of Tocobaga before the publication of her book, Fenn’s work to narrate indigenous history by looking out from an indigenous center to a European periphery shaped my approach to my chapter on “the long contact.”

Studies of indigenous slavery have done the most to expand the boundaries and breadth of contact-era studies of any new field of scholarship, while a flurry of new prominent studies has brought the subject to a new prominence both within public discourse and the field at large. Andrés Reséndez’s popular and comprehensive 2016

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33 For intermediary biographies, see Camilla Townsend, *Malintzin’s Choices: An Indian Woman in the Conquest of Mexico* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2006) and Frances Karttunen’s *Between Worlds: Interpreters, Guides, and Survivors* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1994). On Catherine Tekakwitha, see Allan Greer, *Mohawk Saint: Catherine Tekakwitha and the Jesuits* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Van Deusen’s work on indigenous slavery is also an important part of the historiography of indigenous slavery, which I discuss below.
book *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* brought the subject to an entirely new audience and prominence, even within the Latin American field.\(^{36}\) However, I conducted much of the research for the slavery section of this dissertation before Reséndez’s publication, and my Madalena material in particular dates from before that time. Our work need not be seen at cross purposes, however. I believe my discussion of indigenous slavery adds to or expands upon Reséndez’s narrative of the other slavery, showing its beginning in the early European exploration of Africa and the close entanglement of Spanish expansion, language, and slavery.\(^{37}\)

It was not Reséndez that I thought of as I researched, nor was it his work that expanded my research horizons, despite the excellent quality of his work. Erin Woodruff Stone’s dissertation “Indian Harvest: The Rise of the Indigenous Slave Trade and Diaspora from Española to the Circum-Caribbean, 1492-1542,” has been a constant companion and source of information.\(^{38}\) The circum-Caribbean breadth of her research, as well as the connectivity she shows across the American Mediterranean, were clear proof of the viability of the Gulf and Caribbean as an analytical area. The way her work links the pace of contact with questions of labor and trade also helped shape my own approach to these issues, and gave me a profound sense of the contours of the linked flow of slaves, bilingualism, and information during the contact period. To return to a previous subject, Nancy van Deusen’s work has expanded on the lives of slaves within Castile

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\(^{36}\) (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016).

\(^{37}\) I also believe Reséndez’ contention that slavery, rather than disease, accounts for most of the early demographic collapse in the Americas is deeply correct in a way that we as a field still have to reckon with.

\(^{38}\) (Doctoral Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 2014).
itself, a circumstance which occurs multiple times during this dissertation. More importantly, her book demonstrated the scope and interconnection of the Spanish Atlantic.

1.4 Organization

Given the wide temporal and geographical scope of this project, I have chosen to organize the following chapters in an unorthodox way. I open with an examination of the Canary Islands, letting this first European contact with previously-isolated indigenous people serve as both its own analytical unit and as a preface for the chapters to come. Mixing analysis of specific moments and texts with examinations of the longue durée of 150 years of contact, I argue that the islands provide a new model for how to discuss periods of cultural encounter, one that takes a longer view of contact as a process, rather than a moment of discovery or conquest. I also suggest four avenues of communication that guide the rest of the dissertation: rumor; gesture and material exchange; conversation mediated by bicultural translators; and music.

The next four chapters each represent both a means of conveying information and a moment in the contact process, represented by the four stages schema seen above in figure 1.1. Chapter 2 takes place at the awareness stage of contact. Focused on

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39 Restall’s *When Montezuma Met Cortés* also expands this historiography on pages 296-311, looking specifically at the slaves of early Mexico. While further abroad, I was also inspired and helped by Tatiana Seijas’ *Asian Slaves in Colonial Mexico* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).
40 This project also benefited immensely from my friendship with Hayley Negrin, who wrote her dissertation on indigenous slavery in the Anglo Southeast at the same time I was writing, and who has been a helpful guide and sounding board throughout this process. Her dissertation is “Possessing Native Women and Children: Slavery, Gender, and English Colonialism in the Early American South, 1660-1717,” (Doctoral Dissertation, New York University, 2018).
Bahamas, Florida, and the southern Great Plains, it is an examination of how peripheries of the American Mediterranean experienced and approached contact, first through rumor, then through cumulative, if brief, experience with Spaniards. I argue that indigenous ideas and experiences guided their reception of visitors. As with the previous chapter, it also reframes contact as a long process, beginning with the initial moment of awareness and continuing in the periods between European visits.

Chapter 3 takes place in the interaction stage, examining how Europeans and indigenous people engaged the senses in pursuit of non-verbal communication through observation, signed communication, and trade. It is an argument, first and foremost, for the efficacy of these modes of interaction, or at least for the belief that the participants had in their efficacy. Secondarily, it is an effort to get at the social-historical reality of what was traded and signed, as well as an attempt to provide frameworks for further analysis of these kinds of interactions.

Chapter 4 is an examination of language acquisition in the wake of interaction, centered around the individuals who acquired bilingual knowledge. Part 1 examines one biographical story, that of the Floridian Tocobaga woman Madalena, as she moved from the landscape described in chapter 2 to life as a slave in Havana and Seville, before her return to her home village as a mission translator. Part 2 draws on the themes of her story—the role of the slave trade in language diffusion and the role of mixed-ethnicity peer groups in acculturation—to guide a prosopographical analysis of translators in this era. I argue that the most important phenomenon in creating a corps of bilingual lenguas (translators) was the human churn generated by exploration and slave raiding, and that
the mixed indigenous peer groups of early Spanish settlements were key in facilitating this process.

Chapter 5 concerns diffusion, specifically the diffusion of western musical instruments, sounds, and music into indigenous communities. Part 1 takes up the discussion of trade begun in chapter 3, looking at how indigenous communities consumed and understood western musical instruments. Part 2 looks at the penetration of western musical styles and musical education into indigenous communities via missionary friars and educated, literate maestros de capilla (choirmasters). This section focuses primarily on indigenous communities across Guatemala, and on the remarkable set of choral texts they left behind. I argue that music, because it could be produced and consumed with high fidelity between groups of people, moved in ways that individual speakers could not. Moreover, because music could only be performed socially, this also meant that even the most western forms of music followed earlier traditions and social patterns of indigenous life.
2 Islands: A Pre-History of Contact in the Canary Islands, 1341-1496

Thence we sailed toward the south twelve days, following the shore, which was peopled by Æthiopians who fled from us and would not wait. And their speech the Lixitæ who were with us could not understand … Landing there during the day, we saw nothing but forests, but by night many burning fires, and we heard the sound of pipes and cymbals, and the noise of drums and a great uproar. Then fear possessed us, and the soothsayer commanded us to leave the island.41

The Periplus of Hanno, 5th or 6th century BCE

The Carthaginian expedition described above serves as a reminder that First Contact situations, and contact across linguistic frontiers, did not begin in 1492, nor even in the Americas. For southern Europeans and the people of the Mediterranean, these experiences began on the coasts of Africa. In this chapter, I tell the story of the first extended period of cultural encounter after antiquity, and of the unprecedented first contact with previously isolated people in the Atlantic world. In fact, given that indigenous Canary islanders lacked seafaring skills, this is the history of seven first contacts, one on each of the seven inhabited islands of the archipelago. This is the story of the centuries-long journey of Canary islanders from isolated independence to life in Spanish-administered islands and, to some extent, slavery across the Atlantic world.

Like their Carthaginian predecessors, the Italians, Normans, Catalans, Portuguese, and Castilians who visited the Canary Islands did so cautiously and tentatively, eager for

profits and opportunities, and quick to retreat in fear or hardship. Eventually these explorers succumbed to the lure of slaves, fertile lands, dyestuffs, sugar plantations, and a political stronghold on the coast of Africa, and established formal colonies. The islanders responded, sometimes casting out hated invaders and choosing to ally with familiar visitors. At other times, they retreated to the safety of their perilous valleys and mountains to avoid contact entirely. Those islanders swept up in the tide of encounter, as allies and slaves, met their counterparts from other islands for the first time.

Poorly documented, half-hearted, and lengthy, the contact process in the Canary Islands feels more like an asterisk than a direct prologue to the story of contact in the Americas. Despite the differences in location, cast of characters, and time frame, the contact process in the Canary Islands parallels and predicts that of the Americas in important and enlightening ways. For the purposes of this dissertation, the story of the Canaries serves as an introduction to behaviors, practices, and terminology that will guide the chapters to come. In establishing these patterns, I argue for the broad similarities of contact practices. Though a Gomera islander, 16th century Dominican missionary, and a 17th century indigenous person from the Great Plains each lived lives as different as could be imagined, when faced with the impossible task of communicating across language barriers, each fell back on similar forms of material exchange, nonverbal signaling, performance, and forced acculturation.

Histories of the Atlantic island frontiers of the Azores, Madeira, and Canaries often rush forward to the end result of their settlement processes, especially the forms of chattel slavery and sugar plantations that would shape the Americas.\textsuperscript{43} They also focus on the establishment of stable colonial regimes, and all the relevant institutions that accompanied that shift.\textsuperscript{44} Like them, I view what happened in the Canary Islands as precedent for future practices. Unlike them, I focus on the years before formal and established European control. Scholars in both streams of historiography, eager to get to the parts most relevant to their analysis and to their peers, tend to give the contact period short shrift. In their haste, indigenous people come across as grist in the mill of overseas expansion, as laboring, expendable bodies in the first sugar mills, or as military problems to be solved in order for colonialism could flourish. After those stories draw to an end, Canary islanders largely disappear. This does not stem from any malice on the part of these historians, but rather from a lack of interest, and a lack of primary documentation. Even without malice, however, this treatment reduces Canary islanders to the role of doomed, passive figures whose time had come to an end. This portrait of indigenous people as doomed, overwhelmed or tragically innocent, is part of what Matthew Restall


has dubbed the “myth of native desolation.” In the case of the Canary Islands, 150 years of war, diplomacy, adaptation, and trade are compressed into a brief tableau of enslavement and extinction. This chapter leaves that image behind, telling the story of what happened in those 150 years of contact, rather than the story of what happened as an ultimate result of contact.

In the context of this dissertation, I refer to this process as the long contact. The long contact is the aggregate experience of indigenous people from successive moments of encounter, and of the long-term changes in indigenous societies created by those encounters. In the Canaries, the contact period of at least 150 years truly was long (and formative), but as I argue in subsequent chapters, this model is more relevant in the Americas than we have been led to believe.

45 Restall, Seven Myths, 100-30.
46 This is true even in archival sources from the islands. The chronicle of the Franciscan Convento de La Inmaculada Concepcion on the island of La Palma, the only mention of the indigenous people was that the “barbarians were defeated” in 1493, the year the monastery opened. “Los religiosos de Nuestra Orden Serafica fundaron conv.to en esta dha isla desde que los señores reyes catolicos la conquistaron y ganaron a los barbaros que abia en ella... opusieronse los naturales tuvieron encuentros famosos pero ayendo eran espanoles, como tenian de sus maiores la noticia de que prosedian de españa con vrevedad se sujetaron dando la obediencia a nro Rey el dia 3 de Mayo de 1493. See “Noticias Sacadas de los Libros Viejos deste convento de la Ymmaculada Concepcion desta Ciudad de la Palma,” Archivo Histórico Provincial – Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Conventos Desamortizados 4076, f.1r.
47 There is a small tradition of more culturally focused historiography on the contact period in the Canaries. For a systematic listing of indigenous intermediaries in the Canaries, see Marcos Sarmiento Pérez, “The Role of Interpreters in the Conquest and Acculturation of the Canary Archipelago,” Interpreting 13:2 (2011): 155-75. The account most focused on the changes within the islands and their islanders is that of Alfred W. Crosby, "An Ecohistory of the Canary Islands: A Precursor of European Colonialization in the New World and Australasia," Environmental Review 8:3 (1984): 214-235. Thornton’s two books on the Atlantic, mentioned above, were also deeply helpful. For an in depth interrogation of the history of the Virgin of Candelaria and her indigenous devotees, see Lorenzo Santana Rodríguez’s excellent “La Candelaria de los Guanches, la de los Augustinos, y la de los Dominicos: Dos Visiones Opuestas del Culto Candelariero,” in Vestida del Sol: Iconografía y Memoria de Nuestra Señora de Candelaria (San Cristóbal de La Laguna: Obra Social de CajaCanarias, 2009), 19-29. For a more intellectual and literary exploration of many of the contact narratives discussed in this chapter, see David Abulafia, The Discovery of Mankind: Atlantic Encounters in the Age of Columbus (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 49-102.
I began to study the Canaries hoping to see the origins of European contact practices, and I did indeed find them. But what surprised me the most was the broad similarities of behavior on both sides—European and Canary Islander—to those we see in the Americas. Like the Carthaginians, the Europeans who first came to these islands were timid and unsure in a way we do not associate with the stereotype of the brash and daring conquistador. Almost from the beginning, they settled on contact practices that would appear in the American Mediterranean, even if it isn’t always clear if they served as direct ancestors or an example of parallel evolution. What is more surprising is the way the isolated North Africans of the islands also fell into familiar patterns, despite two millennia of isolation and radically different cultural backgrounds from both visiting Europeans and the indigenous people of the Americas. I refer to this emergent property of contact as parallelism or universalism.

My final two arguments roughly presage the second half of this dissertation. The first is the role of travel, captivity, and slavery in fostering verbal communication and further contact. While the Canary Islands lacked gold and silver, they did offer bodies to fill the servant’s quarters of European homes and the incipient sugar plantations of Madeira and the Canaries. These slaves, forced into a ruthless program of linguistic immersion, quickly learned European languages. Europeans could therefore benefit both from the forced labor of their captives while also drawing on their new bilingualism to further contact. As part of what I call the “retrieval system,” European authorities and

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48 I would argue that conquistadors were far more timid than the myth of the dashing Cortés and Pizarro would lead us to believe, but the visitors of the first century of contact certainly had less of a sense of how contact was done, with some occasionally laughable results, as we shall see.
merchant communities ensured that these stored intellectual resources were available to future expeditions. As we will see in a Portuguese narrative later in this chapter, this cultivation of bilingualism was an intentional strategy by European explorers, and included at least some Canary islanders who went willingly to live in Europe. The human churn induced by this process also allowed indigenous people to encounter each other. I argue that this system, perfected by the Portuguese on the African coast and in the Canaries, in turn informs practices of slavery and translator acquisition in the Spanish Americas. As part of this thread of analysis, I show how European communicators went from cautious and self-conscious actors to deliberate slavers and diplomats. The second point I make throughout the chapter is the importance of nonverbal social signaling and of the sensory world, trade, hand signals, and developing relationships with the material world of “the other” in fostering contact. Europeans were attracted to the islands by Canarian dyes, then by Canarian bodies, Canarian music, and eventually, Canarian land. Islanders developed relationships with European metal, buildings, and eventually, art. Both used hand signals to broker initial communication, and evaluated the usefulness of the opposite culture by the trade goods they could bring.

This chapter moves chronologically through the history of contact in the Canary Islands, beginning with the first full contact narrative from 1341, and ending around 1496. Given the paucity of narratives from long-term trading posts and missions, the majority of the incidents in this chapter come from encounter narratives. At times I also try to reckon with what was happening beyond the narrative scope of these European visitors, drawing on material culture and the marginal observations of the main sources of this chapter.
2.1 The Islands and Their Islanders

Before we talk about the ebb and flow of European fortunes in the so-called Fortunate Isles, it is important to conceive of them as an ecological and human space. The seven islands (figure 2.1) were each quite literally insular. Though the islands were visible from one another, the Berber-descended people living on each island had abandoned seafaring, along with metalworking and writing, at some point after their migration from north Africa.\textsuperscript{49} In the millennia of their isolation, these original settlers had become Gomeros,

\textsuperscript{49} For a succinct summary and historiography of the process of settlement of the seven islands, see A. José Farmjia de la Rosa, Werner Pichler, Alain Rodrigue, and Sergio Garcia Marin, "The Libyco-Berber and Latino-Canarian Scripts and the Colonization of the Canary Islands," \textit{The African Archaeological Review} 27:1 (2010): 13-41. Basing their estimates on epigraphy and carbon dating, the authors argue for a first wave of settlement in the sixth century marked by a Phoenician-derived North African alphabet found at
Guanches, and Bimbaches, each suited to their island and each with a mutually-unintelligible dialect.\(^{50}\)

The settlers of the Canaries came from the neighboring countries of North Africa. Since they carved their names in caves throughout the islands, we have a rough timeline of their arrival and who they were. In the 6th century BCE, people from what is now Morocco settled the untouched landscapes of the eastern islands, at roughly the same time Hanno’s Carthaginians were exploring the coast of Africa. They carried knowledge of an alphabet closely related to the one developed by the Phoenicians in the Levant. They carved their names soon after their arrival: NGRN, STN, MZL, MSKL, and KSN.\(^{51}\) Around the time of the birth of Christ, a second wave of northwest Africans arrived. They wrote in a Roman-influenced descendent of the earlier alphabet, and they in turn wrote their names; Hanibal, Nufel, Vasima, Sima, Mascal, and a man who called himself Son of Makuran.

While their mainland cousins were developing the modern Tiffinagh script still used in north Africa, the sons and daughters of Son of Makuran were losing their connections to the mainland. The islands lacked metals completely, and the amphorae and metal tools of the Mediterranean world slowly disappeared from Canarian archaeological sites. This loss of Mediterranean material goods coincided with, or caused, the loss of seafaring among the islanders, and the seven populations of the seven islands several sites on the island, which broadly conforms to the idea of North African exploration in the Atlantic that appears in the Periplus of Hanno, quoted above. The second phase, approximately the first centuries BCE and CE, coincides with a Roman-influenced alphabet related to the modern Tifinagh script used in North Africa to this day.

\(^{50}\) Although writers have, in the past, referred to all Canary islanders as Guanche, this name only applies to islanders from Tenerife.

\(^{51}\) This alphabet, like Hebrew, does not include vowels.
drifted further apart in dialect and culture. By the arrival of the first visitors in the 14th century, the descendants of the ancient writers had been isolated for at least a millennium and had each become their own people, suited to their own island.

In terms of geography, each island is torn, in its own way, between the sea and the Sahara. Moving west from Lanzarote, the islands become greener before finally ending at the small, verdant terminus of El Hierro. Within each island, there are multiple microclimates, often divided between the contrasting fecundity and aridity of the two. A twenty-minute walk north from the palm-tree ringed beaches of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria is a blasted peninsula with only a few ground-hugging succulents. In the lofty heights of Anaga, in the north of Tenerife, one can stand on a ridge and look down to the sea in two directions, through dry succulent scrublands to the south and dripping, fragrant *laurisilva* forests to the north wringing moisture out of the sea breeze. On the tiny island of El Hierro, the ancient tree El Garoé was so effective at this task that it, and an accompanying stone basin, served as the island’s water source for centuries.\(^{52}\) The native peoples of the Canaries survived by mixing fishing, goat herding, barley farming, and the cultivation of figs and palm fruit, depending on the local climate. This intense localization, both cultural and ecological, is reflected in the clothing of Canary Islanders as depicted in the sketches below (Figure 2.2). Large, well-watered islands like Gran Canaria could support large flocks and fields, and its people could dye fabric and so

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\(^{52}\) El Garoé was the subject of intense interest by Europeans from the time of its discovery in the Norman conquest of El Hierro. The chroniclers of the Bethencourt expedition, Pierre Bontier and Jean Le Verrier, record a description of the tree and its corresponding basin in *The Canarian* (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1872), 124-6. A 1588 description appears in Leonardo Torriani, trans. Alejandro Cioranescu, *Descripción e Historia del Reino de las Islas Canarias* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Goya Ediciones, 1978), 215-8. The translators of the *Canarien* note that records suggest that this tree fell due to a storm in 1612.
complex clothes. On the smaller, rockier island of El Hierro, the people lived more simply, and their clothes reflected it.
Before we step into the analysis of individual moments of contact, it is helpful to give an overview of the history of the islands from around 1300 onwards, to give a sense of the overall trajectory of Canary Islands history. As I say below, the islands were rediscovered in the early fourteenth century, although they were likely known in the Islamic world before that time. After brief forays on behalf of Portugal and Castile failed, the Catalans of eastern Spain and the Balearic Islands founded missions that lasted until the end of the century, when tensions caused by the slave trade forced the missionaries to leave. In 1401, a Norman force under vassalage to the king of Spain conquered the smaller, outlying islands. This was then followed by a time of competition between the expanding maritime power of Portugal and Castile, during which Portugal tried to use a combination of hard and soft power to wrest the islands from their relatively absentee landlords. Finally, in 1477, Isabella and Ferdinand launched the *conquista realenga*, or royal conquest, of the populous islands of La Palma, Gran Canaria and Tenerife. The last independent Tenerife islanders were only defeated in 1496, four years after Columbus made landfall in the Bahamas.

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53 From Leonardo Torriani, trans. Alejandro Cioranescu, *Descripción e Historia del Reino de las Islas Canarias* (Santa Cruz de Tenerife: Goya Ediciones, 1978). The original 1594 manuscript is held as manuscript 314, “Discrittione et Historia del Regno de L’Isole Canarie Gia Dette Le Fortunate” in the Biblioteca Geral of the University of Coimbra. For a full catalogue listing, see http://bdigital.bg.uc.pt/cman/show.asp?i=314&p=16

54 For a more in-depth summary of this history, see Thornton, *Africa and Africans*, 27-30 and Kicza, 229-238.
2.2 Speaking as Italians, 1341

Discovery, as in the case of 1492, or 1519, or any other auspicious date of European encounter, is a slippery concept that obscures as much as it uncovers. Even ignoring the ways the seven groups of islanders knew their respective islands as intimately as could be imagined—as the whole of their terrestrial universe—people from North Africa and Europe knew something of these islands. Rumors of some Fortunate Isles or Islands of the Blessed beyond the Pillars of Hercules had existed since antiquity. Islamic sources knew about the islands long before their official rediscovery. One tantalizing document even describes the capture of a subject of the Islamic kingdom of Granada named Assamar Ben Ali Al-Canari (the Canari) by Mallorcan forces, perhaps meaning that Granadan subjects had explored the islands, or even brought back people from the islands.

The first firm date of European exploration is 1312, when the Genoese Lancelotto Malocello blew off course and found his now-namesake island, Lanzarote. If Malocello was not the first, someone would have made this same discovery as European shipping expanded. The Canary Current runs swiftly from the coast of southern Portugal through the Canaries, effectively pushing ships exiting the Mediterranean into the Canary Islands. By 1339, Malocello’s discovery (and a possible settlement) appeared on its first map, a Genoese chart by Angelino Dulcert.

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55 For a discussion of Islamic and Classical descriptions of the Canary Islands, see Abulafia, 33-36 and Thornton, *Cultural History*, 15.
58 See Thornton’s helpful map and explanation in *Cultural History*, 10-1.
The Portuguese king Afonso IV was apparently moved to action by rumors of Malocello’s discovery so close to his shores. In 1341, he outfitted an expedition of Florentines, Genoese, Castilians, and other Spaniards to explore and subdue the islands under the leadership of the Florentine Angiolino del Tegghia dei Corbizzi. That neither the king nor Tegghia knew much about the islands (and by extension, quite what Malocello had found) is obvious from the fact that the caravels of the expedition carried “horses, arms, and other machines of war for the taking of cities and castles.”60 These tools of European siege warfare would be useless among the steep volcanic hills and simple dwellings of the Canary Islands, and are not mentioned in the actual account. The little armada, complete with its siege weaponry, left Lisbon in June and returned in early November, not with news of chivalric deeds of conquest, but with a modest cargo of rather dull commodities. The three ships returned with four islanders (likely from Gran Canaria), goat skins, fish oil, seal skins, tallow, the red wood of the exotic dragon’s blood trees that dot the islands (Figure 2.3), and a red dye made either from those same trees or from orchilla lichen. As the crew of this disappointing expedition dispersed to the ports of southwestern Europe, it set off a chain of events that would preserve the memory of this expedition, as opposed to that of Malocello.

One of the ship’s captains, a Genoese named Niccoloso da Recco, travelled to Seville after his return journey to Lisbon, where he was apparently asked to give testimony on his experiences. The Florentine merchant community of Seville apparently either sat in on these proceedings or obtained a copy of the summary and forwarded their information to Florence in a letter dated November 15. There, it fell into the hands of Giovanni Boccaccio, famous Italian humanist and author of the Decameron, who summarized Recco’s testimony in a brief Latin passage that remains today. Boccaccio seems to have done little to alter the text in his summary, save to add an introduction explaining its context and provenance, and a small aside about the nature of discovery. That aside, a remark questioning whether the islands were newly “found,” can be read

Figure 2.3: Mature dragon's blood tree in San Cristóbal de La Laguna, Tenerife. Photo by the author.
either as an acknowledgement of the classical tradition of the Fortunate Isles, or of the epistemological question of whether inhabited islands could truly be said to have been found.⁶¹

Recco effectively wrote two encounter narratives. The first, much like Columbus’ narrative written 151 years later, is the account of an experienced Italian sailor exploring a new chain of islands, relating events and evaluating the trade goods and people found along the way. The second part introduces a specific genre of formal, non-verbal interaction that would be repeated across the Americas, as we will see in chapter 3. In this section, Recco gives an account of the formal interactions between the four captured islanders and his crew, and seemingly draws from notes made during the voyage. While this portion is mostly confined to the end of the piece, its conclusions influence the framing of the encounters of part one in key ways.

2.2.1 Recco’s First Account

In Lanzarote, four indigenous men watched as a small flotilla approached.⁶² Perhaps, given that theirs was the first island to be discovered and named, they had seen ships before. The four men traded with the newcomers, giving them the seal and goat skins; fish oil; tallow; and other local products that would make up the paltry cargo taken

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⁶¹ Pastore Stocchi takes the former approach, rendering the ambiguous Latin phrase “eas insulas quas vulgo repertas dicimus,” as “quelle isole che comunemente diciamo Fortunate,” believing “repertas” to be an error. See Tutte le Opere, 970. Chil y Naranjo renders this phrase as “que se dicen vulgarmente haber sido encontradas.” See Chil y Naranjo, 260.

⁶² Quite which islands were visited when is a bit of a mystery. I have followed the convention of the text, which says that the second island visited during the expedition was “Canaria,” which would imply that they first island they visited was Fuerteventura. However, context clues in island descriptions, as well as the geography of the islands themselves, would seem to suggest a first landfall in Lanzarote. The evidence is ambiguous enough that I have deferred to the text.
to Seville. The text does not record what the islanders received in exchange. Unimpressed with the under-clothed men and women “of savage aspect and custom,” the inhabitants of the ships left quickly, circumnavigating the island and then departing.\textsuperscript{63}

Later, in Gran Canaria, a large group gathered on the beach, men and women apparently untraumatized by slave raids and trusting of these sea-borne strangers. Recco perceived an eagerness among the Gran Canarians for a contact moment, saying that they showed a desire for the men of the ship to take pause and trade.\textsuperscript{64} The sailors, acutely aware of their inability to understand the words shouted at them from shore, stayed in their launches.\textsuperscript{65} Four indigenous men swam out to the boats, where they were captured to be taken back to Portugal. If these weren’t the first slaves taken from the Canary Islands, they were among the first in what would become a depressingly august tradition.

Recco’s men recovered their boldness on Tenerife, encouraged by the fertile, cultivated landscape they saw, dotted with solidly built stone houses. A landing party of 25 men went ashore to investigate a settlement, where they met 30 Tenerife islanders, all nude. The islanders ran, seeing the weapons the landing party carried, and the martial postures of their bearers.\textsuperscript{66} The landing party broke the doors of these stone houses, arousing howls of complaint from the observing islanders, who had apparently removed themselves to a secure location nearby. Inside, they found fine figs and wheat, well-constructed roofs, and wood-paneled walls. One house was a temple, apparently devoted

\textsuperscript{63} “asperis cultu et ritu” Tutte le Opere, 971.
\textsuperscript{64} “Que gentium multitudo ostendebat se cupere cum his qui in navibus errant habere commertium et moram trahere. Ibid., 972-3.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid., 972-3.
\textsuperscript{66} This kind of evaluation of group demeanor and equipment as a social signal is taken up in chapter three.
to a solitary statue of a man with a ball in one hand, his waist and genitals encompassed by a palm-leaf kilt, which was also taken to Lisbon.

The rest of the expedition was consumed with more humdrum tasks of exploration. Recco has a comment about the mutual unintelligibility of the island dialects, meaning they must have tried to communicate with the other islanders using their Gran Canarian captives. In all, the expedition found 13 islands, six of which were inhabited. The first number is correct if one includes islets; the second is not, meaning that one group of islanders failed to show themselves. It is after this passage that the narration begins to taper off, just as the expedition had. It is in these waning remarks that some of the magic and unintelligibility of the Periplus of Hanno begins to re-enter the narrative. Recco described the snowy peak of Teide in Tenerife as capped by a large mast and sail that was visible throughout their circling of the island. Corbizzi, Recco, and the others “judging this portent to be a work of enchantment […] did not dare disembark.” Recco, in a dramatic turn, comments that “they also found many other things that Niccoloso refused to repeat.”

Recco ends with a decidedly mercenary, or mercantile, observation: “above all, these islands do not seem rich, with the men of the ships having barely recouped their costs.” Like the journals of Columbus or the account of the Alarcón expedition recounted later in this dissertation, it is concerned above all with the material realities

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67 “Et ultra hoc eas dicunt ydiomatibus adeo inter se esse diversas ut invicem nullo modo intelligantur.” Ibid., 976.
68 “Quod monstrum cantatis fieri carminibus arbitrantes, in eandem insulam descendere ausi non sunt.” Ibid., 976.
69 “Ceterum et multas alias res invenerre, quas hic Niccolosus noluit recitare.” Ibid., 976.
70 “Tamen apparer eas non dites insulas, nam et naute vix expensas viatici exportandi resumpsere.” Ibid., 976.
over deep anthropology, in this case the profitability of trade, the quality of leather goods, and the culinary merits of island doves. Recco is different in his disinterest in conquest of a few islands without obvious wealth, despite the war materiel the expedition had brought. Nor did he have an especially deep interest in the profits of the slave trade or of inducing the islanders to labor. The voyage was early enough that the patterns of colonialism and slavery were in their incipient stages. Sugar plantations did not yet exist in the western Mediterranean, and, with the exception of the Crusades, Europeans had shown little interest in founding new settlements abroad. The Portuguese did not round Cape Blanco (today the border between Western Sahara and Mauritania) until a century later, which also marked when the Portuguese slave trade began in earnest.\footnote{Slaves were a commodity traded across the Sahara before this time. Thornton places this shift towards raiding as occurring just after this expedition. See Thornton, \textit{Africa and Africans}, 29. For more on the early stages of the slave trade, see Matthew Restall and Kris Lane, \textit{Latin America in Colonial Times} (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 42.} The Portuguese would not begin to settle Madeira until roughly the same time. Thus, from a Portuguese/maritime Italian perspective, this journey would be framed by experiences of trade along the Moroccan coast, more focused on profit than expansion or slave-taking. Like the Carthaginians in the Periplus of Hanno, these were north African traders that had passed into a space they could neither understand fully nor profit from, and thus they retreated.

\subsection*{2.2.2 Recco’s Second Account and the Birth of Sensory Interrogation}

In brief asides throughout section 1 of the “De Canaria,” Recco reveals information that he could not have learned in the circumnavigations and brief sorties...
described in his narration. In Gran Canaria, where linguistic timidity and disinterest kept them from even making landfall, Recco describes the sense of social hierarchy observed among the islanders, and that their language was as sweet and free as Italian.\textsuperscript{72} It is a foreshadowing of part two, the second encounter narrative in this text, gleaned from extensive contact with the four Gran Canarians taken back by the expedition.

Recco begins his second narrative with a description of the bodies of the Canary islanders before moving to their responses to stimuli and to their mores, essentially moving from the outside into whatever interiority he could perceive. Recco recounts their blond hair, beardlessness, strength, and uncircumcised penises. As we will see in later accounts, he shows a profound interest in their nudity, at least relative to wool-clad and leather-shod Europeans. He then remarks on their remarkable sense of fairness and the way they shared any food they received. Recco also infers a sense of social hierarchy from the way the men deferred to the best-dressed among them. Recco then describes a performance that would be recreated across the world, a kind of experimental interview I have dubbed the sensory interrogation.

At some point, the men of Recco's ship staged the sensory interrogation after the alternatives were exhausted. They had tried speaking to the islanders in every language they knew, but the islanders recognized none of them. Finally, they fell into speaking via signals and objects, with the islanders responding “in the manner of the mute.”\textsuperscript{73} They

\textsuperscript{72} “Est quidem, ut referunt, idioma corum satis politum, et more italico expe
ditum.” Ibid., 972.

\textsuperscript{73} “Nutibus loquitur eis et nutibus ipsi respondent mutorum more.” Ibid., 978. This phrasing is somewhat unusual, given the historical context laid out by Céline Carayon in a recent article in which she argues that Western intellectual connections between signed communication and disability are relatively recent. See her article “’The Gesture Speech of Mankind’: Old and New Entanglements in the Histories of American Indian and European Sign Languages, \textit{The American Historical Review} 121: 2 (2016), 461-91.
would bring the islanders objects from the European world, using them as props to elicit responses and spur signed communication. The interrogating hosts brought refreshments first: figs (familiar and enjoyed); bread (unknown and enjoyed); and wine (unknown and hated). Discouragingly, from the perspective of a ship of Italian merchant, crystal goblets, sable furs, and gold were utterly unknown. Presumably still using objects, or fingers, the sailors managed to learn the Gran Canaria islander words for the numbers 1 through 16.

In the absence of a shared language, the senses of Recco, his men, and the islanders they captured and encountered became the chief means of communication, as they would countless times afterwards. Whether directly inspired by this moment or not, European explorers would imitate this procedure across Babel. In these types of encounters, observation and performance took the place of speaking and listening, and material goods served as gifts, props, and experimental tools to simplify and enhance the experience of these improvised performance-conversations.

### 2.3 Kidnapping, Conversion, Catalans, and the Virgins of Candelaria

In the years after the Italian/Portuguese expedition, people, trade goods, and ideas began to move across the beaches of the seven Canary Islands in what historian Alfred Crosby calls the “cultural softening up” of the indigenous people of the Canaries. What

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74 Abulafia points out that the practicality of these interviews were likely tied to mercantile interests in the precious metals and luxury goods to be found in the West Africa trade. See Abulafia, 42.

75 This number system seems to have been decimal, with “marava” serving as both the number ten and a modifier of the digits one through six. For a thorough consideration of Canary islander numeracy, including this dataset, see José Barrios García, “Sistemas de Numeracion y Calendarios de las Poblaciones Bereberes de Gran Canaria y Tenerife en los Siglos XIV-XV,” (Doctoral Dissertation: Universidad de La Laguna, 1997).

76 Crosby, 223.
happened, blow by blow and year by year, is hard to discern because the sources themselves are rather scarce. In this section, I examine one long thread in that “softening up” that began at some unknown time in the fourteenth century and continued through the sixteenth. It is the story of how the people of Tenerife came to embrace a statue of Mary, and eventually, the communal life and beliefs that that statue brought. It is a story of kidnapping, material adaptation, the shady legal claims of different factions of friars, and how the Guanche people of the island (arguably) converted themselves to Christianity with minimal outside interference.

We know that Catalan missionaries had trained a dozen kidnapped Gran Canarians in Catalan and the basics of Christianity by 1352, when they conducted their first missions on the island.77 These missions lasted for several decades. Iron, repurposed in the form of fish hooks, became a prized commodity and coveted trade item among the islanders. This in turn provided an economic beachhead for missionaries and traders visiting the islands.78

The story of one kidnapping, recorded late in the 16th century by the Guatemalan Dominican friar Alonso de Espinosa, serves as a parable about the kinds of cultural change happening in the islands. Espinosa recounts the story of the miraculous apparition of the Virgin of Candelaria (Figure 2.4 – 2.5) supposedly told to him by some of the last Guanche elders remaining on Tenerife. One day, two shepherds walked on a beach and encountered a woman carrying a baby standing atop a rock. The woman refused to acknowledge the shepherds. Frustrated by her mute indifference, they tried to injure her

77 Sarmiento Pérez, 171.
78 Crosby, 221-3. The role of iron in trade voyages to the Caribbean is taken up in chapter 3.
to provoke a reaction, but the stone knives of the Guanche men cut only their own flesh. They were stabbing a statue.

Eventually recognizing the power of this object, the Lord of Güimar brought the statue to his home. There, according to Espinosa, it was the cause of miracles and the subject of worship, even if her worshippers did not know who they offered their reverence to.

Providence provided the statue, and now it would provide her emissary. Following the conquest of Lanzarote and Fuerteventura, slave raiders captured a young man as he was fishing. He was baptized, instructed in the faith, and given the name Anton. Excelling in European language and the study of the faith, he was eventually voluntarily released from bondage to pursue his work as a missionary. Having gained the trust of his fellow islanders despite his European clothes, he began his ministry, explaining to the crowd that:

[this statue is] (he said, in his own language) Achmayex, Guayaxerax, Achoron, Achaman: the mother of the sustainer of heaven and earth. By this, she is queen of both. What a symbol of His promise (prenda) you have in your land! Know how to keep her, know how serve and please her, for through her and her intercession you shall come to the true knowledge of God, who is the Guayaxerax to whom you pray.79

79 “porque esta es (diziendolo en su propio lenguaje) Achmayex, Guayaxerax, Achoron, Achaman. La madre del sustentador del cielo y tierra y por tanto es Reyna de uno y otro, y pues tal prenda tenéis en vuestra tierra, sabelda [sic] conservar, sabelda [sic] servir y agradar, para que por su medio e intersesion vengays al verdadero conocimiento de Dios que es el Guayaxerax que confessais, por tanto sabed agradecer este beneficio…” Alonso de Espinosa, Del Origen y Milagros de la Santa Imagen de Nuestra Señora de Candelaria (Seville: Fernando Mexia mercader de libros, 1594), 42. The larger story is on pages 31-44.

Prenda is almost impossible to translate in a straightforward fashion, since it is a legal term that Espinosa is using in a clever way, and even defining the word invokes other Spanish legal concepts. A prenda, according to the Diccionario de La Lengua Española, is a “mueble” given specially for the security or completion of an obligation.” In turn, mueble can be used to refer to furniture in general, but is used in legal documents of the 15th and 16th century to mean “the movable patrimony of a house.” Espinosa is thus
He then led them in worship. Under the watchful eye of Anton, the statue was moved to Achbinico, later renamed the Cave of San Blas, where it would remain for over a century. The parish of San Blas would remain a center of Guanche religious life well into the 16th century.

Figure 2.4: Detail from the *Capilla de Nuestra Señora de Candelaria* depicting the statue's arrival among the Guanche, Anonymous, 1752. Note that it combines the Guanche’s failed attack with her later adoration.\(^8^0\)

Espinosa’s tale was not as we will see, a selfless act of ethnography, nor simply the work of a pious biographer of the region’s most notable apparition.\(^8^1\) However, the simultaneously invoking the symbolic reality of the statue as an object embodying the promises of God, its status as a valuable piece of communal patrimony, and as a physical piece of “furniture.” For definitions, see Real Academia Española, *Diccionario de La Lengua Española*, (Madrid: Editorial España Calpe, 2006), 1549 and 1823.

\(^8^0\) Reproduced as the opening image in Carlos Rodríguez Morales, *Vestida del Sol: Iconografía y Memoria de Nuestra Señora de Candelaria* (San Cristóbal de La Laguna: Obra Social de CajaCanarias, 2009).

\(^8^1\) An intertextual reading of this story is as a Marian retelling of an anecdote in the book of Acts. Espinosa (or more charitably, Anton-via-tradition-via-Espinosa) seems to be invoking the story of Paul’s ministry in Athens in Acts 17: 16-34. In this story, Paul encounters a statue with an inscription reading “TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.” Brought before a group of religious leaders, Paul then explains that the subject of their worship is “The God who made the world and everything in it, he who is Lord of heaven and earth.”
elements of this story are emblematic, and provide a possible picture of what the slow approach of indigenous Canary islanders towards European societies looked like. Regardless of their provenance, European material goods and art entered indigenous society. Even abandoned religious facilities would remain behind on the largely dry islands for decades, perhaps serving as ritual sites for Canarians even in the absence of European priests. Espinosa attributed the presence of the Virgin to divine intervention, but it remains more likely that it was left there. At the same time, returned captives like Anton carried knowledge of European languages and religious beliefs with them. The relative lack of religious supervision also allowed Canarians to make elisions between local religious traditions and European ones, with Mary taking the place of a Guanche female deity and serving as an introduction to Christian forms of devotion. In the same way, the glacial cycle of advance and retreat of European presence allowed islanders to get used to the material realities of Spanish presence.

Islander participation in the church, even after the Catalan period of the fourteenth century, seems to have been largely limited to islander sites like the cave that housed the Virgin of Candelaria, and to forms of devotion that seemed to naturally comport with earlier Canarian modes of expression. Compared with the Dominican, Augustinian, and Franciscan missions of Mexico, focused on indigenous-language instruction and tight social control, these laissez-faire mission fields seem strange. The sources of the era

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This pattern of historical ventriloquism of classical narratives was being employed across the colonies of Spain’s empire. See Felipe Fernández-Armesto, “‘Aztec’ Auguries and Memories of the Conquest of Mexico,” Renaissance Studies 6:3-4 (1992), 287-305.

82 This is broadly similar to arguments made about the religious lives of the Maya of Belize after Spanish withdrawal from the region made by Elizabeth Graham in Maya Christians and Their Churches in Sixteenth-Century Belize (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2011).
largely ignore what was happening in indigenous parishes.\textsuperscript{83} Partially, this was a result of the thin European population of the islands, and the fact that half of the islands remained unconquered for most of the early colonial period. But there was also an epochal shift in approaches to conversion that took place largely in the sixteenth century.

The most concise statement of this earlier vision of missions and conversion comes from a sixteenth-century case about Taíno encomienda labor in Puerto Rico. The statement is a summary of the results of a royal panel convened to determine the proper mode of conversion for indigenous peoples:

Their majesties, to ease their consciences, ordered a meeting of their confessor, lawyers, theologians, canon lawyers, and doctors of jurisprudence, in which there were some clerics, and ordered that after they were well informed by those who had a great deal of knowledge and conversation with the Indians of these islands. [They were] to determine the way that should be taken in the discourse with and indoctrination of the Indians of these islands that they might be Christians. It was determined that without the communion of the Christians, they could neither convert nor after conversion be kept and indoctrinated.\textsuperscript{84}

In this form of mission, the presence of Europeans—or at least the presence of islanders in church ceremony and parish life—was more important than intensive education of the kind Latin Americanists have come to expect from Mesoamerica. It is within this framework that Canarian slaves imported to the mainland “turn[ed] themselves Christian”

\textsuperscript{83} Perhaps the most telling example of this institutional and historical blindness to indigenous conversion appears in a 18th century chronicle of the history of the Franciscan Real Convento de la Inmaculada Concepción on the western Island. The chronicler summarizes 150 years of contact, and the fate of the islanders of La Palma, in the most dismissive way possible: “Los religiosos de Nra Orden Serafica fundaron conv.to en esta dha isla desde que los señores reyes católicos la conquistaron y ganaron a los barbaros que abia en ella… opusieronse los naturales tubieron encuentros famosos pero ayendo eran españoles, como tenian de sus maiores la noticia de que prosedian de españa con vrevedad se sujetaron dando la obediencia a nro Rey el dia 3 de Mayo de 1493.” See “Noticias Sacadas de los Libros Viejos deste convento de la Ymmacula Concepcion desta Ciudad de la Palma,” Archivo Histórico Provincial – Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Conventos Desamortizados 4076, f.1r.

\textsuperscript{84} Archivo General de Simancas,CRC,LEG,148,f.4v.
and gained their freedom, with relatively little inquiry or concern on the part of the Spanish crown.

Beyond a lax attitude towards conversion, this relative lack of oversight allowed islander converts to build parishes and parallel institutions that served their own interests and largely at their own impetus. In researching the history of the Virgin of Candelaria, Canarian researcher Lorenzo Santana Rodríguez has found an interesting example of this sort of self-constructed parish life, and the ways in which subsequent history erased this work.

Figure 2.5: Virgen de Candelaria, Cristóbal Hernández de Quintana (1651-1725)

By the late sixteenth century, the friars of the Dominican order were embroiled in a decades-long struggle to seize the statue, in part to control the donations of penitents and pilgrims visiting it. Espinosa wrote about the mysterious and divine providence of the statue in order to deny the long-standing Guanche claim to it. While his version of the
history of Candelaria would come to be the dominant one, earlier Guanche legal
documents describe a more complicated and less miraculous version of the story of the
statue. In 1544, a legal proceeding inaugurated by the San Blas community stated that the
shrine of Candelaria had become the primary ritual site for the community, where
baptisms and other important rituals in the life cycle of the community were performed.
The Guanche not only worshipped there, they had built both the church and the statue
itself.85 This means that the unconquered Guanche of Tenerife were creating Christian
religious art on their own, and building religious institutions around that art, decades
before conquest. Providence had not made the statue that the Dominicans coveted, the
Guanche had. They had built their community and become so familiar with the object of
their devotion they had made another one. If the sixteenth-century incarnation of the
statue was the second, what was the origin of the first? How did the statue come to be in
Guanche hands? What did that first statue look like? Finally, how had the Guanche
transformed the work in remaking it? Although Espinosa reckons that the statue arrived
in 1400, there is no evidence for that.86 Anton could have been a Catalan captive as much
as a French one. In fact, since Espinosa’s arguments about the provenance of the statue
are essentially made in bad faith, we can feel relatively free to dispute them.

In order to determine the provenance of the first statue, we must look for clues in
the second. The most prominent secular theory, at least in certain circles, is that
missionaries from Mallorca brought the original statue during their mission, and that the

85 Lorenzo Santana Rodríguez, “La Candelaria de los Guanches, la de los Augustinos, y la de los
86 Espinosa, 31-2.
original statue may have been based on the patron virgin of Mallorca, the Virgin of Lluc (Figure 2.6).\textsuperscript{87} If this statue was made in fourteenth century Catalonia, we must determine what the second Virgin looked like, and what statues from that time and place looked like.

The Guanche-made statue depicted in the image above was lost in a flood in 1826, and thus we must rely on verbal descriptions like Espinosa’s and the numerous paintings of the statue found throughout the island.\textsuperscript{88} There are many painted representations of the Virgin of Candelaria on Tenerife and elsewhere that have been included in the exhibition book \textit{Vestida del Sol} (including the images above). Combined, these can provide a reference for that now-lost statue. Starting with the face of the Virgin herself, virtually all the representations show a full, rounded, gold-skinned face, with strong, dark arcing eyebrows high above dark almond-shaped eyes. The plane of her forehead continues to the bridge of her nose, which is relatively narrow. Her cheeks are marked with a slight blush. Her mouth is narrow, with full red lips in an exaggerated pout. In her left hand, she holds a long candle, and Jesus sits supported by her right palm, leaning against her shoulders. Underneath her removable clothes, as we see in image 2.4, she is wearing a blue cloak with a gold pattern and gold trim, and a gold or earth-toned dress cinched at the waist with a belt. Her hair is brown and parted in the center. The margins of her garments, including the belt, are marked with capital letters that do not

\textsuperscript{87} María Jesús Hernández, "Un trozo de Canarias en Mallorca," \textit{La Provincia: Diario de Las Palmas}, April 27, 2013.

\textsuperscript{88} Clements Markham, “Introduction” in \textit{The Guanches of Tenerife} (London: The Hakluyt Society, 1907), X.
spell any known words. Jesus has light brown hair and holds a bird with a slightly elongated neck and looks outwards and down.

Looking at French and Catalan Virgin and Child statues from the time period of this chapter, the composition has been reversed. All of the mainland statues have Jesus in her left arm, and an object in her right hand. In most, she has a slight lean to compensate for the weight of her child, giving the statue a slight S-curve, but this does not seem to be present in the Virgin of Candelaria, who regards the audience directly. In most of these statues, Jesus holds a small orb or book, representing the world or The Word, but birds are found in some examples.

Upon further examination, the suspicion of contemporary Mallorcans that Candelaria is based on a Catalan artwork is almost certainly true. A simple visual consultation would suggest that the first Virgin of Candelaria was not based on the Virgin

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90 Forsyth finds that birds are especially common in eastern France.
of Lluc. While there are some similarities between the two (both share similar lips and hair), the jutting chin, heavy brows, sleepy eyes, and closer-set features of the Virgin of Lluc give the statue a very different appearance. The Jesus of the Virgin of Lluc is decidedly more rotund, demonstrative, and clothed than the Virgin of Candelaria as well. However, scholarship on the Virgin of Lluc does give us one clue. In Catalan Virgin and Child statues of the mid-fourteenth century, roughly equivalent to the time of the Catalan Missions (1352-93), the Christ child or Mary hold birds (Figure 2.7).

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91 Though the statue of Jesus now holds the standard book, it is possible that this is a later restoration, and that he previously held a bird. Gabriel Llompart, writing about the statue, suggests that birds were the fashionable choice in the mid-fourteenth century, roughly when the Virgin of Lluc was made. See his article "Nostra Dona Santa Maria de Lluc (Mallorca)," Analecta Sacra Tarraconensis 60 (1987): 274.
Figure 2.7: Comparison of contemporary statues of the Virgin and Child.

2. Guillem Seguer. Our Lady of the Choir from Santa Maria de Valbona de les Monges, Urgell, Catalonia, ca. 1335-45.
3. Guillem Seguer (attributed), Altar Frontal of the Corpus Christi from Santa Maria de Valbona de les Monges, Urgell, Catalonia, ca. 1335-45. Held at the Museu Nacional D'art de Catalunya.
4. Detail from Guillem Seguer, Virgin and Child.
5. Circle of Arnau Bassa, Detail from Triptych with Madonna and Child with the Crucifixion and the Annunciation, Catalonia, ca. 1345-1348. Held at the Walters Art Museum in Baltimore.

Narrowing down the time and region helps focus the search for a more direct example of what the first Virgin of Candelaria looked like. Although we cannot know, I believe there is a strong family resemblance to the work of Guillem Seguer. Seguer was an artist, sculptor, and architect active in and around the mainland Catalan town of Lleida from the 1340s through the 1370s. Seguer’s versions of Mary (see image below), whether painted or sculpted, all have the same arcing eyebrows, almond-shaped eyes, distinctive nose and lips, and enigmatic expression. There are also broad similarities in clothing, including the cloak and dress outfit in images 1 and 3, the gold border in image 1, red cape lining in image 2, and (possibly) Mary’s grasp around a cylindrical object in image 2. More importantly, all three feature the same style of handheld bird. If the

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92 Primary sources regarding the life of Seguer are scarce, mainly listing the projects he was involved with. To compound the problem, scholarship concerning Seguer is largely available only in Catalan-language publications not widely available outside of Spain. For an overview of the primary sources, see Francesca Español and Marc Escola, "Avinganya I els Montcada: La transformació d’una casa Trinitària en Panteó familiar," D’art 13:1 (March 1987): 171-2. Español is also the author of a book-length monograph on Seguer that I intend to consult at a later date.

93 I will note that image 3 does not share the same pattern of blush as the others.
original statue was not by Seguer, it certainly looked like one of his. However, as images 5 and 6 show, similar design elements were employed in Virgin and Child art made by his contemporaries. Image 5, despite its early Italian Renaissance style, has a nearly identical facial structure (save for indentations around the outside of the eyes, and a stronger chin), and the Christ child is posed quite similarly to the second Virgin of Candelaria with a similar bird. The (exceedingly charming) image 6, from Navarre, offers an earlier, less formal version of that same basic face. Each, along with the Virgin of Lluc, points toward a cohesive artistic tradition of the Virgin and Child that was repeated in the later statue.

Whether or not Seguer was the artist, this aesthetic pattern helps rewrite the story of the Guanche encounter with this statue. Rather than occurring around the time of the Bethencourt expedition, the statue likely arrived in the early decades of the Catalan mission. That arrival may have been as mysterious as the legend told by Espinosa, caused by a providential shipwreck of the kind discussed in the next chapter. More likely, however, it was brought by missionaries who began the work of evangelization, only to have that work cut short by circumstance. Whether they had been instructed to revere it, or simply admired it, the Guanche decided to move the statue to the cave. Decades passed, missionaries—whether Anton or not—came and went, and the Guanche slowly approached standard Christian devotion.

At some time before the machinations of the Dominicans, the statue needed to be replaced, having been damaged by over a century of the damp air of the seaside cave. When this moment transpired is hard to guess at, but it must have been some time after Bethencourt and before conquest. The sculptor who made the statue had access to gold
leaf, blue pigments, and, one imagines, iron tools. The artist had also seen letters, although they do not seem to have been literate. Given the price of these materials and tools, the Guanche were willing to invest a considerable amount of resources in remaking the statue.

With wood, paint, and tools, the work began. The sculptor must have had some cultural association in mind when inverting the composition, since otherwise the statue seems to have been relatively unaltered in its reproduction. The statue Recco mentions had a ball in one hand, suggesting that these kinds of compositions existed in some form in Canary Islander art already, and perhaps the sculptor imitated the orientation of those statues. Other changes were more quotidian. The distinctive S-curve in the Virgin of Lluc, the Seguer virgins, and image 5, was simplified to make the composition more straightforward. The face may have been rounded off a bit more at the bottom, in keeping with a tradition of bulbous-looking human figures present in pre-contact islander art.

Finally, after copying the paint stylings of the previous statue, the artist turned to the borders of Mary’s garments. I have not seen a Virgin and Child with this style of lettered detailing from the time, although it does appear in later engravings. Perhaps, as is suggested by Crosby, the artist simply respected the symbolic power of the written word. The complete text read:

TIEPFSEPMERI*
EAFM*IR ENINI FME A REI*

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94 If one looks carefully at the first image of the Virgin of Candelaria depicted above, the left lapel features a backwards capital N, which may have been present on the second statue. Crosby suggests a similar timeline, and notes that the Guanche of the San Blas region were willing to be Spanish allies in the conquest, perhaps indicating a more advanced level of contact with Europeans. See Crosby, 223.
95 Crosby, 223.
There is a subtle coherence to the letters that suggests that they are based on an earlier text. The asterisks show a familiarity with the form of written or printed media, where such marks would be used to indicate the end of phrases. But there are also three fragments that suggest that this may once have been a text about the Virgin herself, whether copied from the page or from an older statue. PVRI and IFANT could be forms of ‘pure’ and ‘infant,’ while Anne is the mother of Mary. Lest we judge the talents of the artist harshly, fourteenth-century Catalan letters, at least in Seguer’s paintings, were highly elaborate gothic forms that would have been an even greater challenge to read than standard Latin capital letters. Another possibility, given that asterisks appear most often in print, is that this text was a sixteenth-century addition. Even with these slight modifications, the second Virgin of Candelaria was a remarkable act of re-creating and re-configuring European religious art for Guanche uses. It was also emblematic of both the amount of time the Guanche had spent with the statue and with Europeans, and the comfort of the Guanche and other islanders with European material culture. Rather than the story of divine revelation and profound isolation told by Espinosa, the story of the second Virgin of Candelaria is a story about the depth of time and connection, and of indigenous talent.

96 St. Anne is not in the canonical gospels, so this is not a Biblical text.
2.4 A Seaside Discussion of the Trinity, Christian Ethics, and the 15th Century Petroleum Industry, 1404

As in Recco’s story, contact narratives from the Canary Islands often carry the sense that Europeans had not yet discovered how to talk about themselves to people who did not share their assumptions. The best example of this tendency was an impromptu session of religious instruction that happened in the aftermath of the Norman conquest of Lanzarote, Fuerteventura, and El Hierro, as related in Le Canarien. Briefly setting aside military affairs and tales of daring, the two priest authors of the text describe their attempts at missionary work. That attempt was a catechism, hastily composed in the wake of the war of conquest to be read to the mixed group of captured and allied islanders by translators.

In the waning days of the military campaign, Lanzarote islanders were increasingly frustrated with their supposed Spanish allies and guests. The treacherous second in command of the expedition, Gadifer de La Salle, betrayed his captain and the terms of peace by selling the nobles of Lanzarote into slavery in Spain while Bethencourt was away. For this betrayal, the Lanzarote islanders rose against the occupying French, taking to the caves and hills of the interior. In retaliation, the men of the island garrison captured more islanders, imprisoning them in their fort.97 Eventually, the rebel king and his followers surrendered to Bethencourt, and promised to be baptized as part of their surrender.98

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97 Bontier and Le Verrier, 57-8.
98 Ibid., 76-9.
Apparently caught unaware by this sudden influx of converts, the two clerics composed “an instruction… as simple as possible for the guidance” of the new converts, “to the best of their ability.” The existence of the *Canarien* itself is proof that Bontier and Le Verrier were authors capable of narrating complex stories, but some combination of cultural baggage and haste hobbles their catechism, rendering it a bizarre and murky text even before it was translated by neophyte slave translators. The Christianity on display in the text is one that has not had to explain itself to outsiders, and the authors seem unable to separate cultural baggage from the core narratives, as one would see in Latin American catechisms of the sixteenth century. They also go on wild digressions that seem misguided even to someone raised in the modern church, while failing to provide enough context to explain these events to their insular audience.

The problems with the catechism begin early, within the first few lines. The assembled islanders would be told that the mother of all was named Eve, who was (confusingly) also named Virago. This double naming comes from a mistranslation of the vulgate, in which these authors assumed Virago was a woman’s name, rather than a woman of masculine spirit. Beyond being bad Latin, it did little to clarify the identity of the mother of mankind. The next clause injects further error and misunderstanding. God is the implied subject of the previous clauses, so when Eve is renamed “Virago, wife

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99 "et pour ce, on a ordonné une instruction ainsi comme ils ont sçeu faire le plus legerement qu’ils ont peu, pour introduire ceux qu’ils ont baptisez, et qu’ils pensent qui seront baptisez d’oresnavant s’il plaist a Dieu, ledit religieux Messire Pierre Bontier et Messire Jean Verrier estoient assez bons clercs qui la firent au mieux qu’ils peurent." Ibid., 80.

100 "et de l’une des costes forma la femme nommée Eve, la mère de tou vivan et la nomma Virago…." Ibid., 80.
of my side,” the authors make the blasphemous implication that Eve/Virago was the wife of God.\textsuperscript{101}

The coherence of the catechism doesn’t improve from there. At various points, it fails to explain who Satan is; lists the genealogy of Mary several paragraphs before explaining who she is; devotes several paragraphs to the inferiority and culpability of the Jews (a people not present on Lanzarote); spends several paragraphs on Passover ritual; and ends in a dissertation on the complementarity of the Old and New Testaments. At times, the authors seem even more comically unaware of the nature of their audience. In their discussion of the racial division of mankind among Noah’s children, the authors fail to mention which group the Canary Islanders belong to, much less what the races were.\textsuperscript{102}

The most humorous misstep, however, comes during an equally rambling discussion of Noah’s preparations for the flood. Describing the caulking of the ark (a riveting and essential topic if ever there was), the authors suddenly gain the barest glimmer of self-awareness. After describing the wood and tar construction of the ark (to people who had lost the tradition of boat-making), the authors say

\begin{quote}
Bitumen is a glue so strong and tenacious that when two pieces are brought together and joined with it, they cannot be separated by any means except the natural blood of women’s flowers. It is found on the water in the great lakes of India.\textsuperscript{103}
\end{quote}

Setting aside the fact that the audience did not know where India was, and may not have been aware of what lakes were, given their life on the arid isle of Lanzarote, this passage

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{101} Ibid., 80. The original reads “Virago, femme de ma coste.” Like Spanish, French uses the term for woman to designate both woman as a category and wife.
\item\textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 83.
\item\textsuperscript{103} “Betun est un glu si fort et si tenant, que quand deux pieces de fait en sont assemblees et ioinctes, on ne les peut par nul art disassembler sinon par sang naturel de fleurs de femmes.” Ibid., 82.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
reads as the nervous interjection of an author who cannot conceive of life outside of Europe. Rendered as it would be through translators, these asides would only make the message more opaque. Apart from a brief restatement of the Credo and Christ’s restatement of the law of God, there is little to this message save for trivia to be mangled by misunderstanding.

In their last paragraph, the authors express their desire that “one of these days some good and learned clerks shall come out hither who shall arrange all in good form and order and shall explain the Articles of the Faith better than we have been able to do.” The Lanzarote islanders forced to listen to this odd mixture of aimless stories and academic pronouncements likely agreed.

2.5 The Retrieval System and Canary Islander Mobility

As more Europeans came to the Canary Islands, the impulse to capture and sell the islanders as a commodity increased. Scattered references in the Canarien make it clear that Lanzarote was a popular site for slave raiding. The translators of that expedition were Lanzarote islanders who had been slaves in France. An aside in the Canarien mentions that Europeans had failed to capture the king of Lanzarote six times. The people of El Hierro had been reduced to only a few hundred by 1402 as a result of the raids on their

104 Ibid., 90.
105 On the Lanzarote interpreters Alphonce and Isabel, see Bontier and Le Verrier, 23. On the elusive king, see Ibid., 25. The text of this edition comes from the Codex Mont-Ruffet or Codex B now housed in the Bibliothèque Villon of Rouen, which emphasizes the contributions of Bethencourt. Another version, Codex Egerton 2709 or Codex G, emphasizes the contributions of Gadifer de La Salle and is housed at the British Museum. Both stem from a now-lost common ancestor written by Bontier and Le Verrier.
small, verdant island. As a result of these raids, the seven communities of islanders had begun to resist European presence with force, particularly when political equilibriums of missions and trading posts were shattered in the wake of slave raids. In 1393, the incipient Christian community of Gran Canaria killed the personnel of a Catalan mission after a pirate attack. Similarly, the chroniclers of the *Canarien* report that after the chief nobles (save the elusive king) of Lanzarote were sold as slaves, the previously peaceful islanders turned against the colonists and killed several of them.

Like Anton, these slaves slowly began to learn the languages of their captors. At the same time, the Portuguese and sailors from northern Italy were exploring the coast of West Africa, also gathering captives for sale, and those captives began the same process. This began what I call the retrieval system. The retrieval system was an emergent property of the early slave trade. As explorers visited new frontiers, they could bring home a few captives, just as Recco had. Then, as they or their peers returned to those faraway patches of coast or islands, they could draw on the expertise of their now-bilingual slaves or captives as translators. With a minor amount of coordination between the merchant communities of different ports, these individuals could be retrieved as needed.

While the Spanish, French, and Italians were participants in this system, the European power that brought it to its zenith was Portugal. As the fifteenth century plodded along, the Portuguese began to make the retrieval system a formal part of their

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106 Ibid., 74.
107 Sarmiento Pérez, 171.
108 Bontier and Le Verrier, 50-1.
109 For an examination of intermediaries during this era in Portuguese history, see Metcalf, 24-9.
policy of Atlantic expansion, and also began to pursue more diplomatic relations with African powers and Canary islanders. At the same time, Canary islanders were becoming worldlier and more experienced with trade and raiding.

The most dramatic demonstration of this newfound sophistication on both sides was a series of events in the 1440s on La Gomera and La Palma. Returning from a visit to west Africa, Alvaro Gonçalvez d’Atayde and João de Castilha decided to cultivate a retrieval system for La Palma, which had thus far spurned any attempt at contact with the Portuguese. The plan was to ask the people of La Gomera to aid the Portuguese in raiding La Palma to capture future translators. Arriving on the island, the Portuguese met two Gomeran leaders named Piste and Bruco, who said that they were allies of Prince Henry (the Navigator). They were his allies, they claimed, because they had been to the palaces of both Henry and the king of Spain and found his hospitality superior. Piste and Bruco agreed to send a force to La Palma, and the Portuguese captured their translators, largely due to feats of Gomeran mountaineering. Piste, as a reward, returned to the household of Prince Henry, where he died after many years. There are two things that are stunning about this series of events. The first is the sophistication of Portuguese efforts, not only in securing future emissaries in La Palma, but also drawing on older diplomatic relationships with the Gomerans that had been very carefully cultivated. While La Palma is a large, relatively approachable island, La Gomera is essentially a high, raised plateau that is hard to visit to this day. That the Portuguese had intentionally courted the people of this small, nearly inaccessible island, and that its people were cosmopolitan to the

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degree that they could compare the hospitality of two European monarch, is unusual and flies in the face of most assumptions.

The disruptions of slavery and the retrieval system had a small but fascinating secondary effect: causing the seven peoples of the Canary Islands to encounter one another after a millennium of isolation. In the Canarien, this experience is limited to one man, the Lanzarote islander Alphonse, who apparently was able to translate the language of two kings of Fuerteventura, who requested that Alphonse remain among them as a translator. But beyond Alphonse, the Bethencourt expedition carried away captives and slaves from each island to take to Lanzarote. Slaving expeditions, doubtless less picky, gathered slaves from multiple islands, who then would begin to communicate in slave ships, much as later African slaves would.

Islanders of all stripes met in the major port cities of Iberia, and possibly in other ports across western Europe. Canary islander freedom petitions from the late fifteenth century mention slaves from virtually every island. Indigenous subjects of the Iberian empires enslaved in Spain often found each other in the sixteenth century, even in regional market towns like Carmona. There, they formed small, interlocking communities of indios, with nothing more in common that the broad ethnonym applied to them. We will never know if a Canarian equivalent to the pan-Guaraní lingua geral of Brazil emerged. Nor can we, at least at present, begin to see how individual islanders began to bridge the effects of centuries of isolation from fellow people lumped together as

111 Bontier and Le Verrier, 162-3.
112 The authors of the Canarien mention the presence of Lanzarote islanders on Fuerteventura in passing, for example. See Bontier and Le Verrier, 172.
canarios. But figures like Alphonse remind us of the existence, both before and after Columbus, of indigenous people who learned to communicate with previously separate indigenous people, like the Taíno among the Floridian Calusa in the following chapter. Contact was not a binary process, and as African and eventually American indigenous slaves entered the Canaries, the number of bridges between languages would grow.

2.6 French Dancing and Canarian Laments

From the beginning, visitors and would-be conquerors of the Canary Islands would remark upon the music made by the islanders. As Boccaccio, or Recco-via-Boccaccio, winds down his account of the islands and their inhabitants, he describes the civility of the four Gran Canaria islanders brought back by the expedition. In the midst of this description, the author writes “Their voices are sweet, and their dances almost like the French.” As we will see later, early modern Europeans perceived music and dance as an important part of civilized urban life.

Later chroniclers would describe the dances and songs of the islands. The music itself was a cappella, perhaps accompanied by claps and stomps for percussion. Their dancing was dominated by high steps and jumps. But the most distinctive aspect of islander music was the sense of sadness it communicated to Spanish audiences. These

114 “Cantant dulciter et fere more gallico tripudant.” Boccaccio, 978-9.
115 For much later descriptions of Canary Islander dancing and music, see Leonardo Torriani’s description in Abulafia, 42; Espinosa, 21; and George Glas’ translation of Juan de Abreu Galindo’s 1632 Historia de la Conquista de Las Siete Islas de Gran Canaria, published in George Glas, The History of the Discovery and Conquest of the Canary Islands (London: R. and J. Dodsley in Pall Mall and T. Durham in the Strand, 1764), 6, 25, 70-1. Historians currently believe Abreu Galindo to be a pseudonym of Gonzalo Argote de Molina, and argue that the work itself is a composite of several others. See Cebrián Latasa and José Antonio, "Gonzalo Argote de Molina y Su Historia de Canarias Inacabada," Cartas Diferentes: Revista Canaria de Patrimonio Documental (2008): 17-104.
laments became part of the Canarian musical legacy, according to musicologist Maximiano Trapero, in the form of the **endecha**. Transmitted either by Spaniards visiting the islands, or via slaves sent to the mainland, the **endecha** became a genre of lament popular in peninsular Spain from the mid-sixteenth century onward. The existence of Gomeran-language **endechas** in Torriani’s manuscript, Trapero argues, proves that this genre pre-dated mainland versions, while linguistic cues from descriptions of peninsular **endechas** describe the style as coming from the islands.\(^{116}\)

What islanders thought of European music is less obvious. Given what we know about the extent of material exchange in the islands, and the extent of trade in musical instruments discussed later in chapter 5, the islanders received at least some musical instruments, including sleigh bells. One experience we know for certain, however, was the response of a group of islanders to an impromptu serenade by the men of Jean de Bethencourt (Figure 2.8). Bontier and Le Verrier recount a time when Bethencourt was received by his men on the islands of Fuerteventura and Lanzarote to the sound of “trumpets, clarions, tambourines, harps, rebecks, bassoons, and ask sorts of instruments.”\(^{117}\) The assembled Lanzarote, Fuerteventura, and Gran Canaria islanders supposedly leapt, danced, and kissed, filled with pleasure and fear at the sheer sonic volume and supposed majesty, and supposedly greeted him as king in their language. In the corporeally-driven world of Canarian music, the sheer cacophony of sound must have

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been a truly astounding experience, pleasant or not, and showed the islanders a sonic power they had not previously conceived of.

Figure 2.8: A man blows a trumpet on board one of Bethencourt's ships. Le Canarien: ms. Egerton 2709.

2.7 Conclusion

In his introduction to Boccaccio’s account of the 1341 expedition, Manlio Pastore Stocchi argues that:

There is no passage in these pages that does not give the reader a genuine glimpse of truth and that is not, so to speak, reconfirmed in the infinite later narratives of discoverers and conquistadors in the old and new world, each reproducing with
surprising unanimity these methods of engagement with the same exotic details that this brief, intense account recorded for the first time.\textsuperscript{118}

There are quibbles to be made about this assessment, as I noted, but Pastore Stocchi’s pronouncement seems a good place to begin a conclusion to this chapter. While authors like Espinosa would have us believe that the contact process in the Canary Islands was so remote, so forgotten, so unprecedented as to require supernatural explanations, the things Europeans and indigenous people did to try to bridge cultural gaps were largely the same as they would be in the Americas. As I argue in subsequent chapters, it is precisely the things that make the Canarian contact process seem so exotic (its duration, the unprecedented process of inter-indigenous contact, the depth of processes out of the direct view of written primary sources) that are relevant to us as we reconsider the contact process in the Americas. Recco and Tegghia de Corbizzi came and went, and the plot of their experiences differed little from that of Columbus. But their visit was the first link in a chain of events that continued, in moments of hard focus and soft, for centuries.

The story of Canarian contact is much longer, much more varied, and much more indigenous than the value judgments of a few merchants just passing through in the search of riches. The one difference that seems most pronounced was the way, in the case of Recco and the rather inadequate French catechism, that Europeans seemed unable to muster the kind of empathy needed to pursue contact effectively. That confidence would only come much later, with the aggressive diplomacy of the Portuguese and the intense

\textsuperscript{118} Ibid., 966-7. The original Italian reads “non v’è tratto in questa pagina che non renda al lettore un genuino sapore di verità e che non sia per così dire riconfermato dalle infinite relazioni più tarde di scopritori e conquistadores nei vecchi e nei nuovi mondi, tutte riproponenti con sorprendente unanimità quei modi del rapporto con le realtà esotiche che il breve ma intenso racconto del Boccaccio ha registrato forse per la prima volta.”
conquest efforts of the royal conquest of the larger islands at the end of the fifteenth century.
3 Rumors: “The Long Contact” and Indigenous Conversations about European Presence

And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.

Matthew 24:6

In the nineteenth century, two indigenous artists on different sides of North America would create two works of art that perfectly encapsulate a deeper truth of contact. In the Canyon de Chelly of Arizona, a Navajo artist painted a series of petroglyphs showing European men on horseback, including a priest, traveling into the canyon. Horses or dogs accompany the retinue. In the center of the composition, the painter placed a man with a long cape with a cross at the center, either a representation of a priest or of a knight of

Figure 3.1: Inupiaq bow, Alaska, mid-19th century.
Santiago. When it was painted is a subject of debate, but it is a testament to the fact that the Spanish had come through and gone, and that the Navajo remained.¹¹⁹

In Alaska, an Iñupiaq artist engraved a walrus tusk as part of making a fire bow. The artist inscribed a series of vignettes moving from right to left. On the far right, a sailing ship, or a small fleet, moves ever closer to the center of the bow, to a beach. The artist drew the passengers of the ships, European men with hats and long guns. When the ships reach the shore, indigenous and European bodies intermingle with their arms raised, perhaps trading, perhaps celebrating. Finally, the hat-wearing Europeans leave the shore to pass into the mountainous interior. The Iñupiaq remain in their coastal home, while the Europeans simply pass through.¹²⁰

While far afield from the American Mediterranean, these two sources are valuable depictions of the indigenous experience of contact, and a reminder that contact was a process that continued for decades, often in the absence of actual interpersonal contact or permanent conquest. Indigenous life had begun long before the first contact narratives were written, and would continue in the long interregna between them. This was the story of Tenerife for 150 years, and as we will see, it was the story of large portions of what would become the United States.


¹²⁰ Although the bow is described as being from Canada on the Boston Museum of Fine Arts website, the place names given as descriptors match two bays (Norton and Kotzeb) in Alaska. For more, see http://www.mfa.org/collections/object/drill-bow-handle-42516.
This chapter is a story of three interconnected locations experiencing life before, during, and after the moments depicted in these works of art. Each of these peoples experienced fleeting contact with Europeans on a recurring basis but were never conquered: the Lucayans of the Bahamas; the Tocobaga and Calusa of southwestern Florida; and the hunter/gatherers and settled agriculturalists of the southern Great Plains. This chapter considers how indigenous people gathered intelligence about visiting Europeans and how they used the experience of fleeting contacts to generate a foreign policy regarding their new visitors, whether borne on horseback or on ships. It argues that indigenous people consciously gathered and retained knowledge about European presence in their region, and that seen from indigenous places, contact is a process of decades and generations, rather than a few encounter narratives written by passers-by.

The stories of the Plains and of Florida are centered on the lives and homes of Miguel and Madalena, respectively. Miguel was a young man born to a group of settled agriculturalists, kidnapped by hunter/gatherers, and then kidnapped by Spaniards. Madalena was a Tocobaga woman from the Tampa Bay region, who was kidnapped by the forces of Hernando de Soto, bounced around the Atlantic world, and returned nearly a decade later as the translator for a mission.

The story of the Lucayans is a tragedy, ending with their total removal to the Greater Antilles to serve as laborers. The two Floridian stories are not. Both the Calusa and the Tocobaga maintained their independence for centuries, only to be overrun by the second great wave of indigenous slavery in the Americas led by English colonists in the Southeast two centuries later. The people of the Great Plains would endure well into the
nineteenth century after centuries of only sporadic contact, and their descendants still live in the region today.

3.1 Rumors: The Bahamas and South Florida, 1492-1570

On the 12th of October 1492, the Lucayans of the Bahamas welcomed their first European guest, and the first European in the Americas, Christopher Columbus. “His hands serving as translator,” Columbus asked about the small bits of gold adorning the noses of the Lucayans, and where more land could be found.\textsuperscript{121} They told him he could find gold to the south, and that there was land to the south, southwest, and northwest.

Columbus went south and southwest, but this is the story of the road Columbus did not take: to the northwest, to the northern Bahamas and on to Florida, and the ways Spaniards and knowledge about Spaniards travelled along this route to the south Floridian polities of Calusa and Tocobaga.

On that day in October, the Lucayans came out in multitudes to trade with the strangers, greeting them on the beach or swimming out to the ship. While there, they observed the planting of the Spanish banner. They were practiced traders and had balls of cotton thread at the ready to offer any visiting buyers.\textsuperscript{122} The Lucayans were mystified by the growths sprouting from the pale men’s faces, approaching them to pat at their scratchy, strange facial hair.\textsuperscript{123} They gave them cassava bread and water. Although they

\textsuperscript{121} Fray Bartolomé de Las Casas, v.1, \textit{Historia de las Indias} (Mexico, D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1965), 207. In context, the larger quote reads “respondían, no con la boca, sino con los manos, porque las manos servían aquí de lengua…”


\textsuperscript{123} Las Casas, 202.
were used to war and trade, the seizure of seven Lucayan captives by the bearded men before leaving likely soured the encounter.\(^{124}\) The bearded men continued south along the Lucayan trade routes to other islands, repeating these same rituals without major variation. On the next island, one of Columbus’ captives and intended translators escaped to tell of life on board.\(^{125}\) By October 17, Lucayans were carrying news of Spanish presence, and Spanish glass beads and coins, to neighboring islands, beginning the process of indigenous communication about Europeans in the Americas.\(^{126}\)

In five days, the patterns of the next half century of Lucayan history were set. The Lucayans fanned out in their trade canoes, carrying Spanish goods and the first news of the pale, bearded strangers. We know they carried these twin cargoes to the Lesser Antilles, and possibly to the nearby southern tip of Florida. Europeans enslaved Lucayans to bring them to the more lucrative gold-bearing Greater Antilles, initiating a lucrative and destructive industry that would leave nearly all of the Lucayans dead or enslaved elsewhere in the Caribbean.

It was the lure of this human cargo, easily captured on their long and low sandy keys, that drew the settlers of Hispaniola, Cuba, and Puerto Rico to the Bahamas, in the direction Columbus had ignored during his first and subsequent journeys.\(^{127}\) Since they already spoke Taíno, Lucayans could easily be incorporated as laborers in the bigger islands. After pearl beds were discovered in the southern Caribbean, Lucayans became

\(^{124}\) Ibid., 209.
\(^{125}\) Ibid., 210.
\(^{126}\) Ibid., 211.
even more valuable as pearl divers. In the early years, when prices for Lucayans ran as low as four pesos, the primary goal was to move them at low costs and high volume as a human commodity. Lucas Vazquez de Ayllón “lost” half of a cargo of 900 Lucayans, penning them up without adequate food or water while he waited for a ship to transport them.\textsuperscript{128} As the value of these slaves grew to between 50 and 150 pesos, the impetus to denude the island chain of people, and to head farther north in search of remaining islanders, increased.

Those inhuman market forces pulled Spaniards closer and closer to the lands of the Calusa and Tocobaga. The Calusa inhabited the Florida Keys, Everglades, and the lower peninsular Gulf Coast, while the Tocobaga controlled the coastline of the Tampa area. Maybe, like Columbus’ beads, Lucayan traders carried rumors from the Bahamas to the mainland. There are only vague hints of a connection between the Bahamas and Florida. Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda, a captive of the Calusa discussed below, writes about the Bahamas as part of his larger description of the US southeast, although whether this mental connection between the regions came as a result of Calusa knowledge or his own information gathering is unknown.\textsuperscript{129} Perhaps the grain of truth at the center of the legend of the Fountain of Youth is Lucayan knowledge of the large cenote-like freshwater springs of peninsular Florida.\textsuperscript{130} If there was trade between the Bahamas and south Florida, the sudden absence of the Lucayans would itself be evidence of change.

\textsuperscript{128} Ibid., 97.
\textsuperscript{129} AGI, Patronato 19, R.32, f.1r.
\textsuperscript{130} On the possible trade between Florida and the Bahamas, see Carl Ortwin Sauer, \textit{The Early Spanish Main} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 189.
Regardless, the Spanish were coming, slowly and inexorably. By 1502, Florida, or something like it, appears in the Cantino planisphere (Figure 3.2) complete with named inlets and rivers. The cartographer’s informants had been to the Gulf-facing portion of Florida that contained Calusa and Tocobaga territory. By 1507, Florida was depicted in even more detail in the Waldseemuller map (figure 3.3), shown as the eastern side of a small Gulf of Mexico.

This new geographic knowledge was expanded upon by the slavers of the Bahamas, and as that knowledge grew, enterprising Spaniards looked at the new lands to the north as opportunities for future conquest and current plunder. By early 1512, Juan Ponce de Leon, the governor of Puerto Rico, had an agreement with the crown to explore and settle the notional northern land of “Bimini,” which was found by slavers he employed. The people his slavers captured could in turn be put to work in his current colony of Puerto Rico. On January 20, 1513, a ship under the command of Anton de Alaminos sold three men from Bimini named Anton, Alonso, and Hernando. Given the vague definition of Bimini in contemporary sources, these men may have been the first North American slaves sold in the Caribbean. The same ship sold six Lucayans from an island called Caguateo, in the city of San German. A fourth man from “Bimini” named Simon, had died in transit. Lucas Vazquez de Ayllón gathered slaves in Chicora, in

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131 AGI, Indiferente General 415, L.1, f. 9r.  
132 AGI, Contaduria 1072, f. 134r.
what is now South Carolina and Georgia, before he eventually attempted to settle that land.  

3.2 Madalena’s World

3.2.1 The Coming of the “Malas Cosas”

Madalena was probably at least an early teenager by the time Spaniards captured her in 1539, some decades after Spaniards, or the rumors that preceded them, had penetrated the world of the Tocobaga. The first stories likely spread to her village when her parents were young, following different information networks and trade routes and coming from several directions. As Spanish settlements in Hispaniola grew, the native population there shrunk. Spanish slave ships fanned out in all directions, snatching up people along the Atlantic coastline from Brazil to the Carolinas. Perhaps contact-borne disease followed the rumors of these raids, forcing the Tocobaga to experience “the disease also so strange, that they neither knew what it was, nor how to cure it,” and leading them to associate the arrival of Europeans with calamity, as the people of Virginia responded to the first visits of the Roanoke colonists. Whether through direct

133 Stone, 192-3.
134 Both chroniclers describe the raid as an early attempt to get laborers for the expedition, so raiders would presumably be looking for adults and possible sexual partners. See Rodrigo Rangel’s account in Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y Valdés, La Historia General y Natural de Las Indias, vol.1 (Madrid: Imprenta de la Real Academia de la Historia, 1851), 545-7 and Elvas, 19-20. Descriptions of indigenous slaves from earlier in the colonial period often include the modifier “niño/a” or “muchacho/a” to indicate ages before adulthood, and descriptions of Madalena and her fellow Floridian slaves do not include these modifiers. Nancy van Deusen also mentions that a 1535 law required that all indigenous slaves be at least 14 years of age. See Global Indios, 132. While Soto’s men likely had little respect for this particular law, royal officials likely would have noted Madalena’s youth in subsequent investigations if it had been obviously violated.
135 I first came across this quote in Dubcovsky, Informed Power, 33. The original source is Thomas Hariot, A briefe and true report of the new found land of Virginia (Frankfurt: John Wechel and Theodore DeBry, 1588), 28-9.
raids on Tocobaga, or through rumors of raids elsewhere, the Tocobaga began to learn about the Spanish.

The tenor of these whispers and repeated stories can be gleaned from a few tantalizing, if rare, narratives gathered from the northern rim of contact. Perhaps, as in the case of an anonymous indigenous informant from the Hernando de Alarcón expedition to the Gulf of California, this awareness began as a secondhand understanding that in some place distant from the Tocobaga homeland there were “other white men with beards like us [Spaniards].” The beards of sixteenth century Europeans seem to have made a lasting impression on indigenous people throughout the Southeast. When looking for a French settlement in what is now South Carolina in 1564, Spanish captain Manrique de Rojas reported that the local indigenous people made hand gestures representing beards as a shorthand for Europeans.

Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca records more visceral and disturbing stories about contact that spread during his time in the Southwest. In southern Texas or northern Mexico, he came across an indigenous man wearing a Spanish buckle as a pendant. This man informed Cabeza de Vaca and his fellow travelers that men like them, with horses and beards and swords, had come and speared two people. After this, the bearded visitors

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136 The original of this document has been lost, but is recorded in Italian in Giovanni Battista Ramusio’s *Terzo Volume delle Navigationi et Viaggi* (Venice: Nella Stamperia de Giunti, 1556), f. 363r-370v. When asked if he had seen men like Alarcón before, the informant replies “no, eccetto che haveva inteso dalli vecchi che molto lontano de que paese vi erano altri huomini bianchi, & con barbe come noi, & che altro non sapeva.” See Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint, “Narrative of Alarcón’s Voyage, 1540” in *Documents of the Coronado Expedition, 1539-42* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 2005), 193 (English) and 211 (Italian).

had “gone to the sea and placed their lances under the water. They had also gone under
the water, and afterward they saw them go above it [por çima] until sunset.”\textsuperscript{138} Though
these bearded men possessed special abilities, they were clearly dangerous.

Cabeza de Vaca reproduces another chilling indigenous contact narrative that
gives us some insight into the kind of fear experienced by indigenous people as their
loved ones were captured by unfamiliar strangers. Although perhaps garbled by
misunderstanding and mistranslation, or inflected with other local horror stories, Cabeza
de Vaca tells of the coming of a person he calls the “Mala Cosa” (Bad or Evil Thing).
The Mala Cosa was a small man with a beard, whose face could never fully be seen.
Around 1519, he came bearing a firebrand and a “long flint,” carrying away natives and
wounding their upper arms in distinctive ways. Framed this way, it is easy to make the
leap that Daniel Reff has: that this story is in part a memory of a 1519 Spanish visit to
Pánuco, as well as later slave raids led by followers of Nuño de Guzmán.\textsuperscript{139} The “Mala
Cosa” in this reading is a Spaniard, wearing a helmet that covers his face, carrying a
sword and a brand to mark his new property. This narrative is far stranger and less
straightforward than a simple story of a slave raid, but it gives us an idea of the

\textsuperscript{138} This is a slight modification of Adorno’s translation, which renders “por çima” as “overland.” Since the
two previous clauses of the sentence refer to the water, it is my best guess that the third one does as well. I
also broke the clauses up and removed the many instances of the word ‘que,’ which serve little grammatical
function in this passage. The original Spanish reads “Y respondiéronnos que se avían ido a la mar, y que
metieron las lanças por debaxo del agua, y que después los vieron ir por çima hasta puesta del sol.” See Rolena Adorno and Patrick Charles Pautz, \textit{Álvar Núñez
\textsuperscript{139} Daniel T. Reff, “Text and Context: Cures, Miracles, and Fear in the Relación of Álvar Núñez Cabeza de
strangeness, inexplicability, and truly unsettling nature of these kinds of aggressive but fleeting early encounters.\footnote{140}

In the early decades of the sixteenth century, when Madalena's parents were still young, tales and apparitions of this Mala Cosa became more and more concrete. The Calusa, living just north of Cuba in the Florida Keys and Everglades, were closest, and therefore the first to know. Taíno refugees from the Spanish Caribbean came to settle among them, escaping the destruction of their native islands just as they did in the southern Caribbean.\footnote{141} The chronicler Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas and the Calusa captive Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda both refer to Taínos settled among the Calusa. In addition, archaeologists have recently found traces of chili peppers and papayas on Calusa site, which were crops that their neighbors lacked but which were available in the Caribbean.\footnote{142} According to Herrera, while Juan Ponce de Leon’s ships waited outside of the Calusa head village, a Spanish-speaking indigenous man approached the ship to offer gold and trade, just before a fleet of canoes assaulted the Spanish ship.\footnote{143} These Taíno refugees must have warned the Calusa about the Spanish, because they continued to be

\footnote{140} Another story of impending contact that invokes the supernatural comes from Colombia. Leaving the settlement of San Sebastian de Buenavista in 1536, a small group under the lead of a captain Cesar met a group living in a large plain. Talking to a spiritual leader via an interpreter, the men were informed that much of the village’s gold had been carried off because he had been informed by a çemi (A Taíno word for a statue of a deity, applied somewhat indiscriminately by Spaniards) of their pending arrival. See AGI, Santa Fe, 72, f.3r.


\footnote{143} Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, Historia General de los Hechos (Madrid: Nicolás Rodríguez Franco, 1730), 248-9. For Escalante Fontaneda’s account of Taino living among the Calusa, see “Descripción de las islas del Canal de Las Bahamas,” AGI, Patronato 18, N.5, R.1, f. 3r.
either wary or hostile to Spanish presence in the coming decades. When the Francisco Hernández de Córdoba expedition of 1517 gathered water in Calusa territory while returning from their failed conquest of the Yucatán, there was no pretext of trade. The Calusa attacked them with poisoned arrows with no warning. The stories told by these Taíno refugees, and of the Calusa's success in warding off the invaders, drifted north, while Spaniards continued to gain knowledge about the Gulf of Mexico. A map published in 1524 (Figure 3.3) with Cortés’ second letter clearly shows two indentations in the Gulf coast of Florida corresponding with Charlotte Harbor and Tampa Bay, another that seems to correspond with either the mouth of the Suwanee or Mobile Bay, and a slightly mis-drawn representation of Lake Pontchartrain and the Mississippi River.

Figure 3.3: Map of the Gulf of Mexico, 1524.

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145 Hernán Cortés, Praeclara Ferdina[n]di. *Cortesii de noua maris oceani Hyspania narratio* (Nuremberg: Fridericum Peypus, 1524). This map has been rotated 180° for clarity. This map is likely based on the findings of Alonso Álvarez de Pineda, an explorer working on behalf of Francisco de Garay who explored
Around 1525, when Madalena was a baby or small child, Spaniards came to Tocobaga, but not as slave raiders or attackers. It was probably late summer, in hurricane season, and some forgotten ship capsized on the return voyage from Mexico. The battered remains of the ship washed ashore, including large packing crates, bits of shoes and exotic feathers, and bearded corpses. This ghastly jetsam struck a chord among the Tocobaga. The burial of these objects is the first recorded story of the Tocobaga way of death; Madalena would carry these ideas to Havana and would use them to frame her views of Spanish religion.

To understand these burials, we have to jump to the late 1560s or early 1570s, when a few isolated folios describing Floridian funeral rites were hastily written along with other notes. Eventually misplaced, they were collected in one of the many huge volumes of "Indiferente" that exist in the modern Archivo General de Indias in Seville. John Worth believes them to be an excised portion of Escalante Fontaneda's report on the indigenous peoples of Florida to the king. They discuss the funeral rituals of the indigenous peoples of south Florida at length. Our narrator tells us that in Tocobaga,

When a principal cacique [high leader] dies, they cut him into pieces and cook him in some large pots. They cook him two days until the meat leaves the bones. They take the bones and place them in a box, one bone with another, until they are arranged as the man was [in life]. They put this in a house that they use as a temple. While they finish putting him together they gather together for four days, and at the end of four days the whole village gets together and leaves on procession, enclosing the bones and

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the Gulf in 1519. His sketch of the same area can be found as AGI, MP-Mexico, 5. I found this book via Matthew Restall’s *When Montezuma Met Cortés.*

146 Worth, 190-1.
giving them much reverence. Later, they say that everyone who goes on procession gains indulgences.147

This was not just a ritual commemoration of the life of the powerful, but part of a deep and widespread funerary culture across peninsular Florida. Archaeologists have found large, elaborate pots serving as containers for the dead made hundreds of years before Madalena's birth.148 In nearby Uzita, we know that these bodies were also kept in boxes, where watchmen guarded them from predators and scavengers.149 Safety Harbor-period skeletal remains show that they left bodies above ground for many years until the flesh left the bones, at which point they were buried.150

Looking much later, and to the north, we can get a view of what the boiling process for elite Tocobaga funerals might have meant. Amy Turner Bushnell summarizes the account of a seventeenth-century friar working in Apalache who recorded the story of the death of their mythical hero Nicoguadca, who requested of his followers that:

After I die, cut up my body and put it into cooking pots with squashes and melons and watermelons, and cover them with water and boil them well, that in steam I may rise up. And when you have fields I will remember you, and when you hear the thunder you may know that I am coming to bring you water.151

147 Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda, “Memorias sobre los indios de la Florida,” AGI, Indiferente 1529, N.40. The original reads: “quando muere un cascique de los principales hazenlo pedazos y quesenlo en unas ollas grandes y quesenlo dos dias hasta que la carne despide los guesos y toman los guesos y encazan un gueso con otro hasta que arman el ombre como estaba y poneno en una casa que ellas tienen por templo mientras que lo acaban de conponer. Ayunan quatro dias acabo de las quatro dias ajuntan todo el pueblo de los yndios y salen con el a la procesion y encierrenlo haciendo mucha reverencia y estonces dizen ellos que todos los que ban a la procesion ganan indulgencias.” The spelling reflects the original. The tradition of articulating skeletons, putting them in boxes, and holding vigils seems to have been universal in south Florida, since these elements appear in several other accounts in the same document.
148 Mitchem, 175.
149 See Elvas, 21 and Garcilaso de la Vega, 32-3.
The boiling ritual formed a covenant between a departed leader and his people, who would remember him as he ensured the rain.

Madalena grew up with these stories and knew these kinds of religious and funerary practices. Though our Catholic informants frame these stories in terms of their own experience, they indicate that Madalena had a set of ideas about the integrity of the body after death, group commemoration of the dead, and funerary practices very similar to those of the Spanish world. If the act of de-fleshing the body in water meant similar things for Apalache and Tocobaga, she would also be familiar with a covenant involving water and renewal through death, echoing the stories of Noah and Jesus, as well as the ritual of baptism.

In an act of eloquent improvisation, the Tocobaga applied their rituals to the Spanish corpses that washed ashore, interring them above ground in the crates they had arrived with. Unfortunately, the Spanish could only interpret it as diabolical. After landing with the 1528 Pánfilo de Narváez expedition, several Tocobaga took Cabeza de Vaca to "many crates belonging to Castilian merchants, and in each one of them was the body of a dead man, and the bodies were covered with painted deer hides," along with the feathers, shoes, and gold that had also washed ashore.¹⁵² Narváez, according to Cabeza de Vaca, ordered the crates burned, thinking it was some kind of witchcraft. Cabeza de Vaca, with later hindsight, appeared to realize the mistake they had made.

The Spanish destruction of their own graves must have seemed like an utter rejection of Tocobaga hospitality, spitefully interrupting the long process of burial and

¹⁵² For the initial description of the crates, see Pautz and Adorno, vol.1, 38-40. For an analysis of the different versions of this story, and of Cabeza de Vaca’s later regrets, see Ibid., vol.2, 89-90.
rejecting the thoughtful inclusion of the gesture. It would not be the last time visitors disrespected the Tocobaga’s wishes. When the Narváez expedition arrived, bedraggled and hungry from the hurricane they had just endured, and far from their intended destination of Pánuco, the Tocobaga offered food for trade. But afterwards, the inhabitants of Tocobaga, and of the other villages, fled. When the Tocobaga met them face to face, they demanded in words, then in gestures and signs, that the visitors leave. But they did not leave. The Spanish took four Tocobaga captive and demanded that they tell them where to find corn and gold. In the abandoned town, Narváez’s men found a gold rattle. They must have pointed at it repeatedly as they interrogated their prisoners. The prisoners told these contemptible visitors, shakers of stolen rattles, demanders of scarce grain, and defilers of their own graves, to go north to Apalache, where gold and corn could be found. Perhaps Tocobaga parents taught children like Madalena to hide the gleaming rattles and other gold objects that so obsessed the Spaniards. Indigenous people like the Tocobaga remembered initial moments of contact for decades and changed their “foreign policy” in direct reaction to these experiences.

3.3 Miguel’s World

In 1602, an indigenous man named Miguel was taken from the southern edge of the Great Plains to Mexico City. He was placed in a room filled with Nahua gold, art, food, textiles, and various indigenous people from across what is now central Mexico, ranging from commoners to high warriors in their ceremonial outfits. He was also given a pen and paper with which to draw a map, and with those tools he drew the map above.

Miguel came from a region that would eventually become southern Kansas and northern Oklahoma and from a collection of people that would eventually become the modern-day Wichita and Apache. Because archaeologists have found the ruins of the foremost city, Etzazoa, we know that the region was centered around what is now Arkansas City, Kansas, at the confluence of the Arkansas and Walnut Rivers in southeastern Kansas. They spoke a Caddoan language, that is to say, a language related to
that of the Caddo people who inhabited Texas and Louisiana to their south. Where water was abundant, like Etzanoa, they lived in large urban settlements focused on agricultural production. Along the drier periphery, groups lived by hunting bison and deer. Tancoa, where Miguel was born, was an agricultural village further up the Arkansas River from Etzanoa near what is now Wichita. In his early youth, he was captured by the Aguacane, a group in the drier region to the southwest, and there they lived by hunting. So Miguel had seen both large swaths of his home region and how both halves lived.

Unlike other parts of the land-locked and flat Plains, the people of this region had easy access to both salt and stone for the manufacture of tools. Chert was available in abundance in the Flint Hills, the small mountain range that runs from north to south roughly in line with Miguel’s map. Salt collected in great salt springs, the black parallelograms marked *salina* on Miguel’s map, lending the name to the nearby Great Salt Flat and Salt Fork of the Arkansas River and serving as the basis of a local salt industry to this day. Despite this self-sufficiency, the lands of the proto-Wichita, and of

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156 For example, the Hidatsa of what is now western North Dakota lacked easy access to table salt, and what salt they did have was alkali salt. The Hidatsa were the northernmost example of the same kind of riverside horticulturalist people of the Great Plains, although from a different cultural group. For an intensive firsthand description of the agricultural cycle of a Hidatsa village, see Gilbert Livingstone Wilson, *Buffalo Bird Woman’s Garden: Agriculture of the Hidatsa Indians.* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1987). Buffalo Bird Woman remarks throughout about the utter lack of salt, save for minerals derived from ash or from nearby alkali springs. For a description of the agricultural economy of the Mandan, with whom the Hidatsa eventually merged, and who also grew maize, see chapter 9 of Fenn’s *Encounters at the Heart of the World.*

157 Donald J. Blakeslee, *Holy Ground, Healing Water: Cultural Landscapes at Waconda Lake, Kansas.* (College Station: Texas A & M University Press, 2010), 49. Careful readers may note that Blakeslee was also the discoverer of the Etzanoa site. Blakeslee’s larger book is about the cultural importance of one spring in particular, and reckons at length with the information presented in Miguel’s map. One of these saline ponds, likely the one near Eguacapac and Aguacane, is mentioned in the Castañeda de Najera narrative of the Coronado expedition. See “Relacion de la Jornada de Cibola, Pedro de Castañeda de
the vast swath between the Ozarks and the New Mexico, were awash with trade, partially accelerated by the mobility of hunting groups. Obsidian and jade from the New Mexico pueblos made its way to the area near Etzanoa. Gulf Coast seashells, like the ones harvested in Tocobaga, are found across the region and into the Southwest. Pottery and stone blades routinely turn up in sites far from where they originated. The roads Miguel drew on his map thrummed with trade and shared information.

What happened when Spaniards entered this network is not so different from the previous story of Florida. Information entered and diffused along trade routes, presaging Spanish presence. Eventually, armed Spaniards would come to Etzanoa, causing a great but temporary upset, and they would return periodically. Meanwhile, the local indigenous people would adjust their diplomatic and military tactics. Europeans would continue to return until, centuries later, the people of the region were subdued. But these stories diverge in important ways. First, Miguel was able to communicate at length about his world, to describe his experiences and to implant them in the colonial archive. Even if his words went undeciphered, his actions were heeded and recorded. Miguel was captured to be an informant. Madalena was treated as a servant until she returned to Florida. Miguel Najera’s narrative, 1560s in *Documents of the Coronado Expedition*, 411-12 and 465. Castañeda de Najera, an Andalusian by birth, spoke highly of the flavor of the salt. A lack of salt precipitated a major crisis, killing several, in the Soto expedition during the expeditionaries’ time in interior Alabama and Mississippi. See “Gentleman of Elvas,” in *DeSoto Chronicles* vol. II, 383-4. Manaytique, an indigenous settlement in what is now southwest Virginia that we will encounter in the conclusion, was a regional power due to their control over the only salt deposits in the southern Appalachian mountains. See Robin A. Beck, “From Joara to Chiaha: Spanish Exploration in the Appalachian Summit Area,” *Southeastern Archaeology* 16:2 (1997), 165-6.

was welcomed into the sala of a prominent Spanish official, and into the bosom of an imperial information gathering apparatus that was more developed, and more focused on a specific area of expansion.

Second, the Wichita still exist as a living people. However much their lives were disrupted by the arrival of American settlers, they were not extirpated or enslaved. Anthropologists and archaeologists were able to speak with the descendants of Miguel’s people. Settlers could and did visit them in their original homes. Plains archaeology and anthropology is thus richer, and there are real stakeholders for the story of Miguel. The final difference, however, is one of geography and chronology. With their village in the best harbor in the western Gulf of Mexico, the Tocobaga encountered Spaniards almost every decade, and their region was the landing ground for multiple invasion forces. Visits were effectively as frequent as the number of boats that went due north from Havana. As we will see, Quivira/Etzanoa was the end of the road for northeastern exploration from Mexico, and nearby western Arkansas was the western extremity of exploration from the Southeast.\footnote{One could argue that the Soto and Coronado expeditions were separate occasions, but the two were effectively a pincer movement converging on the Arkansas River valley. Since both were inspired (at least in part) by reports of the survivors of the Narvaéz expedition, both left within a year of each other, and both reached this area within one year of each other. As we will see, one indigenous woman provides a tantalizing link between the two expeditions.} Francisco Vázquez de Coronado came east from his exploration of the pueblos. The survivors of the Soto expedition passed through western Arkansas around the same time. Humaña and Leyva, unauthorized conquistadors, would come in 1593. Finally, in 1601, Juan de Oñate would again look for Quivira after conquering the pueblos, leading to Miguel’s capture. Between these infrequent expeditions, there were gaps that could encompass generations, rather than decades.
3.3.1 Arrival, part I: Hernando de Soto and Francisco Vázquez de Coronado

In their accounts of the wider southern Plains, the members of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado’s and Hernando de Soto’s expeditions give us hints that indigenous people from this central region had already seen Europeans before, particularly in Texas and the Pueblos. Coronado in particular was looking for a legendary urban settlement called Quivira, which seems to correspond with Etzanoa. European witnesses of the expedition to Quivira were also tantalized by what they thought was evidence of previous Spanish presence, or of reminders of the dry lands and nomadic people of North Africa. Among the Querecho, a group in the western Plains, the members of the Coronado expedition met a blind old man who told them through signs that he has seen four Spaniards many days before, both in the western Plains and further to the southwest. These men were Cabeza de Vaca and his three companions. Indigenous people in the region seem to have viewed the friendly, faith-healing-oriented visits of Cabeza de Vaca as the default mode of encounter when they met other Europeans. When the expedition was further east, closer to the plains but still somewhere in west Texas, the expedition seized upon a mighty pile of bison skins. This upset the local Teyas, who had been conditioned by Cabeza de Vaca and his band to believe that Spaniards were figures who brought blessing and healing rather than theft. In the Jaramillo account, as the expedition approached Quivira, the local indigenous people threatened to flee at the sight of Spaniards, until they

160 “Juan Jaramillo’s Narrative, 1560s” in Documents of the Coronado Expedition, 515 and 522. The original is held as AGI, Patronato 20, N.5, R.8.
161 “Castañeda de Najera,” in Documents of the Coronado Expedition, 409 and 464c. The original of this manuscript has been lost, but a 1596 copy is held at the New York Public Library as Rich Collection no. 63.
were reassured by the translators of the expedition. This would seem to be proof that a rational fear of armed Spaniards had spread as a result of slave raiding further south and west along the coast and the borderlands of Mexico.\textsuperscript{162}

There are several moments in the Spanish accounts where the narrators seem equally primed to see Europeans who had come before them.\textsuperscript{163} After describing the old man who had met Cabeza de Vaca, Najera describes an indigenous woman “as white as a woman of Castilla.”\textsuperscript{164} In high spirits as he finally approached Quivira, Coronado was apparently under the impression that Quivira was ruled by a Spanish survivor of the Narvaéz expedition, and sent him a letter in Spanish.\textsuperscript{165}

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{162}] See “Jaramillo” in Documents of the Coronado Expedition, 516.
\item[\textsuperscript{163}] It is possible to attribute this to the Cíbola mythology of a lost European settlement that supposedly guided the Coronado expedition, but I find it more likely that this is attributable to the expectation that there were other Narvaéz survivors beyond the Cabeza de Vaca contingent. As Richard Flint points out, however, there is an underlying current of Orientalism in descriptions of the Quiviran wing of the Coronado expedition. The desert landscape, combined with a perception that Asia lay somewhere near North America that would persist until the later 16th century, led Spaniards to describe the Querechos, Teyes, and Quivirans in Turkic, Arabian, and North African terms. See “When East Was West: The Oriental Aim of the Coronado Expedition,” in Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint, eds., The Latest Word from 1540: People, Places, and Portrayals of the Coronado Expedition (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2011), 105. Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, the leader of the Spanish expedition that permanently settled Spanish Florida, similarly believed that the Chesapeake Bay was a Northwest Passage providing a swift route to Asia. For more, see Lyon, The Enterprise of Florida.
\item[\textsuperscript{164}] “Castañeda de Nájera,” in Documents of the Coronado Expedition, 409 and 464. Translation by Flint and Flint. The original Spanish reads “una india tan blanca como muger de castilla.” Nájera then goes on to describe the woman’s facial tattoos and eye makeup in distinctly North African and Arab terms.
\item[\textsuperscript{165}] “Jaramillo” in Documents of the Coronado Expedition, 516. A parallel account of this moment reproduced by Francisco López de Gómara says that Coronado believed the king of Quivira to be a a cross- and virgin-worshipping bearded man who read from a book of hours. See Stan Hoig, Came Men on Horses: The Conquistador Expeditions of Francisco Vázquez de Coronado and Don Juan de Oñate, (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2013), 106. It is worth noting that Coronado, as well as scouting missions that proceeded him, had seen indigenous-built crosses in the pueblos. See Juliana Barr’s discussion of cross-shaped \textit{katsinas} in the Puebloan area in “There’s No Such Thing as ‘Prehistory’: What the Longue Durée of Caddo and Pueblo History Tells Us about Colonial America,” The William and Mary Quarterly 74:2 (2017), 229-32 I deal with Yuma perceptions of European-made crosses during the Alarcón expedition to the Colorado River in a following chapter.
\end{itemize}
Spaniards finally appeared in the region of Etzanoa with the arrival of Coronado. Despite Coronado’s lofty hopes, the cluster of village sites he thought of as Quivira was densely populated but held neither Spaniards nor mineral wealth. He met with the actual king, and after a season of exploring, returned to the Pueblos with the help of six Quiviran guides, down the long line marking Miguel’s map between Etzanoa and San Gabriel. A Franciscan friar, Juan Padilla, chose to start his own independent mission in Quivira despite Coronado’s wishes, in a direct parallel of the Luis Cáncer story told later in this dissertation. He was killed after a brief exploration of the region, but Lucas and Sebastian, two African lay brothers, buried his body. They, along with a Portuguese lay brother named Andrés del Campo, escaped to Mexico.\footnote{I rely here on the composite account created by Hoig. See \textit{Came Men on Horses}, 103-25.}

Soto, in his characteristic way, burned a swath through western Arkansas, waging war and taking captives. At Tula, he encountered the first group of bison hunters near the Arkansas River. Discouraged by the increasingly arid landscape and by the resistance of the Tulans, he turned back to the Mississippi, where he would die.\footnote{While she focuses on the Caddo to the south, whom the remnants of the Soto expedition encountered later, Juliana Barr argues that it was neither morale nor climate that halted the westward progress of the Soto expedition. Instead, Caddo military strategy, diffuse settlement structure, and rejection of Spanish diplomacy, forced the Spanish into retreat. It is certainly a possibility that the Caddoan people Soto encountered near Etzanoa presented similar barriers. See Barr, “‘There’s No Such Thing as ‘Prehistory,’” 216-22.} He had come within a few hundred miles of Etzanoa, and news of his violent campaign almost certainly permeated up the Arkansas River. His men, encouraged by rumors of Spanish presence in the West that likely referred to Coronado, explored Louisiana and eastern Texas, before making their separate return to Mexico.\footnote{See Charles Hudson, \textit{Knights of Spain, Warriors of the Sun} (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 1997), 320-79.}
One woman managed to become part of both expeditions, showing just how close they were to one another and how people and how swiftly information could travel across the distant edges of the southern plains. While still in the western pueblos on their way out to Quivira, a tattooed woman managed to escape the caravan, fearing that she would be returned to slavery in her previous home of Tiguex pueblo. She fled east, and apparently did not stop until she had crossed most of what is now Texas. There, in her third captivity, she was captured by Moscoso’s remnant of the Soto expedition. When the survivors of the Soto expedition testified after their arrival in Mexico City, survivors of the Coronado expedition corroborated the details she had told them.\textsuperscript{169} Low on supplies after their long trip down the Mississippi, Moscoso’s men left 500 of their slaves and camp followers, including the tattooed woman, in southern Louisiana, creating an instant diasporic community on the banks of the Mississippi. At the end of this long journey, here was a village of assorted people who had lived alongside Spaniards, who had seen their worst abuses. The sexual assaults and rapes many of these women had endured meant that they carried with them the first generation of North American mestizos.\textsuperscript{170}

That group, along with the African lay brothers, serve as an important reminder of the nature of these contact situations. While we refer to them as Spanish \textit{entradas}, Spaniards were but one constituent part of the roving communities that were Spanish expeditions. Soto and his men had captured women, children, and men from Tocobaga

\textsuperscript{169} I originally encountered this story in Hoig, 117. For the original account, see “Castañeda de Nájera” in \textit{Documents of the Coronado Expedition}, 412 and 468-9. For a brief account of the Soto expeditionaries’ testimony, see Garcilaso de la Vega’s account in \textit{The DeSoto Chronicles} vol. II, 546-9.

onward. They had brought their African slaves from the Atlantic world. Before them, they drove a much-diminished herd of pigs, and some of them rode atop the horses they had brought all the way from Cuba. The people of Tula, the Caddo, and the runaway woman saw the Soto camp as a motley assemblage of faces and species, some more familiar than others. Coronado came to New Mexico with thousands of Nahua from across central Mexico, including at least several Tlatelolca. People from all across the north and west of Mexico came with him. Guides captured among the Pueblo peoples who had come from the plains led them, offering at least some culturally familiar faces. By sheer volume, the majority of would-be invaders and visitors to Etzanoa and the southern Plains were indigenous, even if they were indigenous people from so far away that they had never been heard of by the Etzanoans.

3.3.2 Arrival, pt. 2

For 40 years, the southern plains were largely free of Spaniards, at least as far as we know. In the Southwest, Spaniards continued to raid for slaves along the northern mining frontier, but they do not seem to have gone too far abroad. In the Southeast, the successors of Soto attempted and failed to tame La Florida, but all failed until the arrival of the Pedro Menéndez de Aviles expedition in 1565. The heart of Spanish Florida was Saint Augustine and the Sea Islands of the Georgia and South Carolina coasts, but Juan Pardo did establish a brief frontier outpost in the high Appalachians of western North Carolina for several years. This was as far into the interior as Spanish eyes saw for the

171 On the participation of Nahua and other indigenous people, see Flint’s foreword to the translation of the Codex Aubin, a Nahuatl chronicle that mentions several of the events of the Coronado expedition in “Record of Mexican Indians Participating in the Expedition, 1576,” in Documents of the Coronado Expedition, 164-8.
next 40 years, and as far as we know, the people of the southern plains saw no Spaniards for these same 40 years.

That generational lull ended, somewhat, around 1580. Though no one came as far as Etzanoa for some years to come, ambitious Spaniards living in Mexico began to cast their eyes northwards. Given that Miguel was a youth when he was captured, and a full-grown and “well-built” man by the time he sat before Valverde, this was also likely around the time Miguel was born.

Many Spanish expeditions and raids made it as far north as the pueblos of New Mexico and West Texas, but few made it to the plains. In 1581, Fray Agustín Rodríguez and Captain Francisco Sánchez Chamuscado went with nine soldiers and 19 indigenous servants to see the mighty, near-mythical buffalo, and to discover new lands and missions. They made it as far as the Canadian River in the Texas Panhandle, but they soon turned around. Antonio de Espejo, nominally sent to rescue the friars of the Chamuscado expedition, made it to the edge of the plains in west Texas before turning around, and died before he could return with an expedition of conquest. Informal (and illegal) slave raiding continued through this period, often crossing the Rio Grande, and Philip II expressed interest in colonizing New Mexico, but this relatively quiet period continued until 1593, with the doomed expedition of Francisco Leyva de Bonilla and Antonio Gutiérrez de Humaña.

The expedition of Francisco Leyva de Bonilla and Antonio Gutiérrez de Humaña had, as far as we can tells, only one survivor, and it was neither Leyva de Bonilla or

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172 Hoig, 139-153. While these sources are largely available via the AGI, they are only marginally relevant to the Miguel story. I have chosen to follow Hoig’s summary of these events as a result.
Gutiérrez de Humaña. It had started as a counter-attack, attacking the indigenous raiders of cattle ranches in the far north of Mexico, but quickly expanded into a full expedition, enticed by rumors of northern riches. That lone survivor was named Jusepe Gutiérrez, a Nahua man from Culhuacan, in what is now southern Mexico City. Humaña had recruited Jusepe as an aide de camp back in Culhuacan. Like all expeditions headed to Quivira, the small group first went through the Pueblos before turning west, through Texas and eventually onto the prairies. Eventually, they reached the urban center of Etzanoa, where they were well-received. They continued on for three days beyond the “Great Settlement” of Etzanoa, and there Humaña and Leyva had some sort of quarrel. Humaña stabbed Leyva with a butcher knife, and several of the indigenous servants, including Jusepe, fled.173

Jusepe was a young man, about 20, and wandered ever-westward back through Etzanoa, through the plains, and through the Pueblo, losing companions along the way until, with the murder of his last companion by western Puebloans, he was alone. He was then captured by Apaches, before news reached him that the Spaniards had arrived in the Pueblos again. He made his second escape, and in the early winter of 1599 he presented himself to the Spanish authorities of San Juan Bautista, New Mexico. He was given to Vicente de Zaldivar, the man who would later control Miguel’s life.

The fates of Humaña’s men, and Jusepe’s lost traveling companions, are lost to us, though there are brief hints in the contact narratives of the Oñate expedition. Miguel’s

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173 Most of what we know about this expedition comes from testimony given by Jusepe in New Mexico. See “Account by an Indians of the Flight of Umaña and Leyba from New Mexico” in George P. Hammond and Agapito Rey, *Don Juan de Oñate: Colonizer of New Mexico, 1595-1628* (Albuquerque: The University of New Mexico Press, 1953), 416-19. The original is held as AGI, Patronato 22, R. 4
original captors and adopted people claimed that the Spaniards were burned in a prairie fire set by their enemies, the people of Etzanao. They also claimed Humaña, now badly burned, was kept as a prisoner in Etzanao; if he was, Oñate neither sought nor found him. Tantalizingly, the official account of the Oñate expedition claims that the people of Etzanao came to them in a gesture of welcome and said in the “Mexican language” of Nahuatl that the women of the village were grinding the corn, suggesting some connection between the now-lost Nahuas and the people of Etzanao.

Jusepe had made Miguel’s journey in reverse, from the Nahua heartland to Etzanao and back, before returning to Etzanao yet again. But more than a pleasing narrative symmetry, Jusepe’s story reminds us of the indigenous nature of contact. The Humaña and Leyva expedition became the Jusepe Gutiérrez expedition through his survival. By that same experience, he became the guide and translator of the Oñate expedition. And while it seems implausible, it may be that when the people of Etzanao reached out to the forces of Oñate, they reached out in a new language of contact: Nahuatl.

As mentioned above, it was Jusepe who led Oñate’s expedition of 100 men, traversing the path he had followed 8 years before. Eventually, Jusepe made contact with a people called the Escanjaques, after a word they used to declare peace. The Escanjaques hunted bison, moving their tipis on travois poles pulled by dogs. They told Oñate’s men, via Jusepe, of Etzanao’s violence towards the previous expedition. Miguel, by capture, was one of the Escanjaques.

The Escanjaques followed Oñate to Etzanao, hoping to use their new allies in war. The people of Etzanao, seeing their enemies and their possible new allies, retreated.
Miguel’s captors ended up in a skirmish with Spanish forces after they began to raid Etzanoa. That same raid led to the capture of ten Escanjaque youths, including Miguel. It was the debris of that battle that also enabled archaeologists, four centuries later, to find Etzanoa.\footnote{This account is a synthesis of “Expedition to the North, 1601” and “Inquiry concerning the new provinces in the North, 1602” in Ibid., 746-60, 836-49 and 862-925.}

\section*{3.4 Conclusion}

One detail emerges again and again in Miguel’s testimony, and appears at least once on Miguel’s map: “Spaniards haven’t seen this.” It is a reminder that even a young man, nearly 60 years after first contact, knew where Spaniards had and had not been as well as the landscape he traversed. Even indigenous people, like him, who had not personally encountered Europeans existed in an information environment that dealt with their presence. We also know that news moved quickly and contemporaneously as soon as Spaniards appeared, whether in the Bahamas or in the interior of the southeast. For narrative reasons, we will return to Madalena’s story in chapter 5, but the subsequent story of central Florida provides more examples of this dynamic. When Madalena’s captor Hernando de Soto arrived in Ocale, just a few days’ march north of Tocobaga, a local indigenous leader intentionally blocked the road through his territory, having received information about Soto’s conduct further south.\footnote{Dubcovsky, \textit{Informed Power}, 22.}

If, as Alejandra Dubcosky has argued, indigenous information networks were primarily concerned with local and inter-indigenous affairs, we must also acknowledge that indigenous responses to European presence were contingent on long-term
evaluations of experiences with Europeans.176 When we move the contact narrative from the pointillist visions of individual European stories to the ongoing experiences of interconnected communities operating over decades or generations, we begin to realize that the long contact matters far more than the moment of first contact. It was the long contact that framed Madalena’s experience in the camp of Hernando de Soto, and all her future experience of the colonial world. It was that experience that guided the people of Etzanoa in their foreign policy, and Miguel in making his map. The long contact, for most of the people that experienced it, was contact.177

176 Dubcovsky, Informed Power, 44-5.
In the image above (Figure 4.1), Diego Valadés imagines the relationship between the senses and the higher faculties in the course of his larger work on evangelizing rhetoric. These rhetorical footholds include the exterior senses (smell, taste, and eyesight) and the interior world (fantasy, cogitation, imagination). In its own improvised and haphazard way, the sensory interrogation on Recco’s ship was a similar attempt to engage the baser senses in the hopes of reaching a shared understanding. This chapter is about the ways communicators seized on the senses to convey meaning and to learn from each other in
the time before widespread bilingualism, when trade, hospitality, observation, and hand signaling were often the only way to make oneself known. I argue that the physical realities of these kinds of interactions, as well as what seem like latent patterns in human behavior, led indigenous people and Europeans to behave in nearly identical, and surprisingly intelligible, ways. Far from clumsy charades, both sides seem to have been satisfied with the outcomes of their trade and signaling.

In my choice of sources and topics for this chapter, I have tried to hew to close observation, searching for texts with vivid verbal representation of visible and sensory stimuli. I have tried, using these sources, to reconstruct the physical realities of these moments of contact and to understand the mental processes that underlined them. By physical reality, I mean the embodied experience of the communicator or audience: the way men and women moved their hands and twisted their faces; the objects people carried, and how they became props in the communicative performance; and the ways consumer goods moved through contact zones.

Translation from language to language, and from experience to prose, creates the loss of fidelity, and I cannot claim to have created a perfect simulacrum of these moments. I rely on vague recollections of the physical world rendered in the often-restrictive forms of sixteenth-century prose, and in turn re-render these ideas another time. Even early modern people acknowledged their inability to render events with perfect clarity and recall, to turn vivid and fleeting experiences into thinner descriptions. Luis Cáncer, the doomed friar and journal keeper whose experiences come into play later in this chapter, stated in his inaugural journal entry that he was worried that if he wrote
less often than every night, that the remarkable events of his mission would not be properly recorded, and thereby reduce its ability to edify readers. 178

Cáncer would agree with the sentiments of an English visitor to Tahiti two centuries later, who feared that he was “so much hurried by attending the Indians on shore all day that I dear I shall scarce understand my own language when I read it again” and therefore fail to provide the information necessary to analyze these interactions. 179 As David Paxman, the scholar who reproduces this quote, argues:

Banks may have meant to suggest only that haste makes writing illegible, but other implications ensue. Writing takes time, often more time than then event being recorded. Also, being of a different and more limited modality than the full range of lived experiences, writing can never exhaust what it represents and must in some degree distort experience. His reflection hints at an additional factor: once writing selectively preserves an event, one may never understand the event in quite the same way. The selective and distorting functions of writing also expose the contingency of experience itself, whose apparent order and clarity succumb to competing visions the instant one reflects upon it through mental representation or records it through verbal representation. 180

As Cáncer, Banks, and Paxman make clear, something is irrevocably lost in these moments of re-encoding, particularly in the voice of a writer who lacked the full cultural context for their physical impressions. Still, as Paxman and others argue, systems of context assembled by later readers such as ourselves can help re-constitute these moments and to unlock some of their meaning.

178 AGI, Patronato 19, R.4, f.1r.
179 David Paxman, ““Distance Getting Close’: Gesture, Language, and Space in the Pacific,” Eighteenth-Century Life (vol. 26, n.3), 80. Paxman’s article concerning the linguistic observations of British explorers in the Pacific, is an excellent analysis of the relationship between theories of language and analysis of speech acts in the 18th century and beyond.
180 Paxman, 80.
Central to any discussion of the re-evaluation of non-verbal communication, or of recovering these moments, is the work of Céline Carayon, the scholar of encounter in the Francophone Americas. In her article “‘The Gesture Speech of Mankind’: Old and New Entanglements in the Histories of American Indian and European Sign Language,” Carayon lays out a series of methodological issues and considerations for re-evaluating indigenous signed communication. Carayon argues that historians are burdened by prejudice against indigenous peoples and with attitudes about signed communication as a product of dis- or inability. This is further exacerbated by the myopia of short time frames, which force historians to consider instances of signed communication in a vacuum. As a result, scholars have missed the importance and ubiquity of sign in indigenous communities. She argues for the possibility of sign as a widespread alternative literacy common among disparate groups, and for the need for a comparative and longue durée approach to hand signals. Carayon bases her arguments on her own experience and frustrations. During her research, she came across Garrick Mallery’s *Introduction to the Study of Sign Language among the North American Indians as Illustrating the Gesture Speech of Mankind*, which is a contemporary account of Plains Sign Language in the nineteenth century. She quickly realized how this unrelated text helped illuminate the accounts of hand signals she encountered in her work on the French Atlantic. Inspired by Carayon, I try to consider the role of sensory observation and communication across Babel to see the common patterns and to develop deeper understandings.

My analysis focuses on four regions, two of which we are already familiar with. In the first section, I look at the unusually thorough records of a captured Portuguese ship operating off of the coast of Puerto Rico. Thanks to the unusual diligence of a scribe, this source allows us to see in detail what Europeans were trading with indigenous people. That detail allows us to think about the utility and meaning of European goods in indigenous life, and the economics of early European trade with indigenous people. A second section deals with the Hernando de Alarcón expedition up the Colorado River in 1540, where the explorer encountered the Cocopah and Halyikwamai. Thanks to Alarcón’s diligence both as an expedition leader and as a narrator, I am able to use this source to see how Spanish explorers had begun to formalize the process of gift giving, sensory interrogations, and signaling. His careful annotation of that signaling also allows me to propose a system for the formal evaluation of hand signals in terms of content and grammatical structure.

In the second half of this chapter, I return to Madalena’s homeland of Tocobaga, and to the story of Miguel. In Tocobaga, I look at how the Tocobaga interacted with European goods, and how Fray Luis Cáncer, a veteran of the early years of colonial Puerto Rico and advocate of peaceful evangelism, approached gift giving and signaling as part of his work. Finally, I give a brief introduction to the performance of Miguel, and to the “stage” that local Nahuas and Spanish officials created to enact his sensory interrogation.
4.1 Puerto Rico, 1507-1513

In the nearly two centuries that had passed between the discovery of the Canary Islands and the conquest of Puerto Rico in 1507, Europeans had a long time and an array of places to learn how to trade and communicate with unfamiliar people. The Portuguese had firmly established themselves in Africa, the Spanish had finished the long conquest of the Canary Islands in 1496, and, most importantly, a generation of Spaniards, Taíno, and mestizos had experienced life in the Spanish colony in Hispaniola.

Ever since 1492, there had been trade in the Americas. In our previous discussion of the Bahamas, we saw how European goods and indigenous rumors flowed out simultaneously from the decks of Columbus’ ships. In chapter 6, I consider the flow of cascabeles (sleigh or hawk’s bells) in Columbus-era Hispaniola and elsewhere. But the lessons Europeans learned from this time abroad are only rendered visible in their later endeavors, particularly in the richly documented conquest of Puerto Rico.

The probanza de mérito (proof of merit petition, generally asking the king for some sort of financial reward in exchange for services rendered) of Juan González Ponce de León provides one window into the ways Spaniards in the Americas had connected trade and contact. In their responses to one question posed to each witness (question three), González and several friends recount his initial conversations with the Puerto Rican Taíno after the first landing of Juan Ponce de León’s invasion fleet at La Aguada in 1507. After meeting this first group, González took two Taíno to the ship and grabbed gifts for them and for the leaders of the village. In the text of this question, and in subsequent answers to it, we gain a view of what things were now considered standard gifts: beads, shirts, combs, mirrors, rhinestones, scissors, and other European goods,
which were distributed impartially and to the great contentment of the assembled
crowd. The outfitters of this expedition were accustomed to Hispaniola Taíno tastes,
and had gathered a package of gifts that pleased the Puerto Rican Taíno.

Some of these gifts seem to have been indigenous-made goods. In the initial
questionnaire, the scribe asks whether Juan Gonzalez Ponce de Leon gave the two Taíno
European objects and “other things of cacona.” In one of the testimonies, Francisco
Rodriguez mentions at the end of his list of gifts “other trade goods native to the Island of
Hispaniola.” If cacona was a Taíno word for trade goods, the testimony makes it clear
that Europeans were intentionally acquiring and transporting Taíno goods in anticipation
that they would be popular in the broader Caribbean. It is hard to know the extent to
which the kind of trade implied by this anecdote was taking place across the Americas,
but it certainly was, from Labrador to Brazil. Nor, even in these early years, was it
confined to Castilians or to formal Spanish colonies. European goods were constantly re-
traded within indigenous trade networks, to the extent that European artifacts were
present in North Dakota by the end of the sixteenth century.

The best place to see this unauthorized trade, and to dig in to the fine details of
trade in the early Caribbean, is from the inventory of a captured Portuguese trading ship
captured off the coast of Puerto Rico. From the beginning of this careful work of
accounting, we realize that it wasn’t even necessarily a “Portuguese” ship, except in

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182 AGI, Mexico 203, N.19, f. 2r, 8r, and 18r.
183 AGI, Mexico 203, N.19, f. 1v. I have not seen this term used elsewhere, and Erin Woodruff Stone, in
personal conversation, had not either.
184 Elizabeth Fenn provides an exhaustive summary of the relevant archaeological literature making this
point for Mandan sites in western North Dakota. See Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the
ownership. Two of the 11 crew members are listed with the surname “Corço,” meaning that they were likely from the island of Corsica. Another sailor, Martin Gil, is listed in the initial roster as simply “El Gallego,” meaning that he was from the northwest Spanish region of Galicia, which had strong cultural and linguistic ties to Portugal, but was removed from the Castilian and Andalusian heartland of the Indies trade. This internal diversity, without considering the possible backgrounds of the other sailors with more ordinary, less culturally specific surnames, paints a picture of a crew of southwest Europeans excluded by law from the nominally Spanish Caribbean, but already comfortable in the region.

Table 4.1: Economic Inequality on a Portuguese Trading Ship

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185 AGI, Contaduria 1071, f. 172r-175v. A partial transcription of this document, in table form, is available as the first appendix of this dissertation. The chart above and table below are based on this data.
Of the ten sailors, eight had purchased trade goods to sell on the voyage, and the contents of their private chests bear a strong resemblance to the list of gifts given by Juan González Ponce de León. Only Francisco Corço and Elias, both common sailors, did not have (or presumably buy) any trade goods for the expedition. The rest of the sailors, along with the captain and fighting men, had purchased trading portfolios ranging from an indistinct package of “mercaderías” (trade goods) to the captain’s 68-entry list of different trade goods. The first two men listed in the table above, the captain Esteban Flores and fighting man Rodrigo Albarez, had the lion’s share of the merchandise, but clearly the other men of the ship had access to capital or savings and a knowledge of what to buy, either from experience or advice from someone with experience (Figure 4.2).

The story the objects themselves tell is of a fully laden ship in the early days of its voyage. Beyond that, the documentary record is relatively silent. If any narrative of the

\[\text{For the full list, see Appendix 1.}\]
capture of this ship is available, I have not found it. In an aside concerning the
government of Pedrarias Dávila’s Castilla del Oro (modern day Central America), the
officials of the Casa de la Contratación (Board of Trade, the governing body for maritime
affairs and the administration of the Indies) were instructed to court the Portuguese
maritime community for their expert pilots. In pursuit of those goals, Spanish officials
were to provide to Portuguese merchants the papers of a ship captured in Puerto Rico,
which would seem to be this one.187

Table 4.2: Contents of the ship

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Iron and metal</th>
<th>Glass and crystal</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>Indigenous manufacture?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>16000 pins</td>
<td>26.45 kg of beads</td>
<td>174 combs</td>
<td>19 green stone lip plugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8000 fish hooks</td>
<td>3.45 kg of rhinestones</td>
<td></td>
<td>6 white stone lip plugs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>638 hatchets</td>
<td>2000 painted and mounted rhinestones</td>
<td>8 bone ear gauges</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>600 needles</td>
<td>2650 long rhinestones</td>
<td></td>
<td>50 stone beads</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>471 scissors</td>
<td>170 mirrors</td>
<td></td>
<td>5 brazas of beads of red clay (bucaro)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>238 knives</td>
<td>22 glass ear spikes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>93 sleigh bells</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61 small bells</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 irons for boring beads</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 razors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

187 AGI, Panama 233, L.1, f.138.
The ship carried a cargo of iron and glass goods, with a focus on glass adornments and iron tools. The iron included thousands of pins, needles, and fish hooks, as well as hundreds of hatchets, scissors, and knives. Bells (to be discussed in chapter 5) made up the rest of the metal goods. Beads and rhinestones were the bulk of the glass goods, with combs making up a smaller share of the cargo. Given the sets of even dozens and sealed packages in the goods of the sailors, along with the small amount of indigenous goods, it seems the 10-man crew was early in their journey, having arrived in Puerto Rico via the Lesser Antilles. Captain Flores had a measure for weighing gold, which gives us some sense of what the ship’s crew expected to receive in return.

In what little trading they had done, the ship’s crew had traded for indigenous manufactures and semi-precious stone jewelry like green stone (jade?) lip plugs and stone beads. Flores seems to have had a more nuanced knowledge of what indigenous consumers wanted, since he carried iron implements for boring holes in stone beads and “22 white glass nails for ears.” Since the indigenous peoples of the Americas lacked glass-making technology, and given the extreme difficulty of re-working glass (and its relative lack of value in a European context), he must have commissioned these spikes in Europe for resale in the indigenous market. Aesthetically similar ear spikes, formed out of the central whorl of a conch shell, have been found in Puerto Rican Taíno sites (Figure 4.3) and were likely common across the Caribbean. To indigenous consumers, they would have been an especially lustrous form of an already-popular consumer good.

188 AGI, Contaduria 1071, f. 172r.
Given the specificity of his cargo, Flores had almost certainly been to the new world, either in the Caribbean or in the culturally similar Tupi areas of Brazil. His crew either drew on their own experience or his while gathering their own small cargoes in Lisbon or the Algarve. Flores also must have had access to large amounts of capital, drawing upon previous profits or the funds of other Portuguese familiar with this kind of trade, whether in Africa or the Americas. The indigenous story told by this ledger is far less obvious, but perhaps more important for what it says about the social history of the circum-Caribbean. First, it tells us about another kind of contact beyond Spanish expeditions or slave raids. If those stories are about the glories of victory or the spoils of war, this is a story of profit and mutual benefit stemming from interaction. While there are occasional Spanish archival documents referring to trade with indigenous people in early archival materials, this story also reminds us that indigenous people had at least some opportunities to interact with other kinds of Europeans and vice versa. This one document hints at an undocumented world that we cannot see, but that seems to have
existed beyond the gaze of the Spanish empire. This possibility, combined with Spanish archival silence on the subject of trade, would suggest that indigenous people were also entering trading relationships and contact situations that we simply cannot see through archival sources.\textsuperscript{189}

This cargo also tells us something about indigenous tastes in trade goods, and how they shaped this early market. Europeans, to the extent they mentioned these goods at all, often dismissed them as trinkets. And while from a European financial perspective they largely were, this underestimates their potential value in these new indigenous markets. Drawing on examples from the eastern coast of North America, Christopher Miller and George R. Hamel have argued that goods valuable to indigenous people were valuable not because they lacked the concept of economic worth, but because their symbolic and utilitarian needs as consumers were simply different.\textsuperscript{190} For example, they argue, Algonquian speakers of the mid-Atlantic made a cultural connection between the soul and reflection, meaning that they placed high value in mica and other reflective stones. European mirrors were not cheap and breakable toys, but a more rare and reflective form of a good they already consumed.\textsuperscript{191} Byron Hamann goes one step further, arguing (based on the specific example of coins in the Pacific world) that historians and others should

\textsuperscript{189} Contaduría 1071 contains the complete import records for this era in Puerto Rican history, in equivalent detail. While I only had one day to consult this massive, nearly illegible volume, many settlers brought large quantities of combs, mirrors, and other goods intended for the indigenous trade.


\textsuperscript{191} See Byron Ellsworth Hamann, “Counterfeit Money, Starring Patty Hearst,” \textit{Colonial Latin American Review} 25:1 (2016): 98-121. As we have seen, mirrors and mirrored object were popular in the Caribbean. The cathedral of Cuzco, Peru is lavishly ornamented with mirrors, supposedly to draw local indigenous populations into the church. For examples of reflective mica art from the pre-contact Southeast, see Robert F. Townsend and Robert V. Sharp, \textit{Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand: American Indian art of the Ancient Midwest and South} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 46-60.
acknowledge that some kinds of goods are universally enticing in a way that explains their ubiquity in the early modern world, even if their value changed depending on context.

Spanish observers were able to identify indigenous market commodities but were far less capable of evaluating why indigenous people valued these objects. Nowhere is this more present than in discussions of the iron trade. An anonymous, somewhat sneering account of the iron trade in the Mariana islands openly mocks the Pacific islanders for their eagerness to get iron goods. The sailors would throw trade iron for excessive quantities of food and the Pacific islanders would dive for minor scraps of iron thrown from Spanish ships, as depicted in the Chinese-style painting above. Despite the judgement of the author and others like him, iron tools and reworked iron allowed indigenous people in the Canary Islands, Mariana Islands, or the Lesser Antilles to pursue

Figure 4.3: Detail from a painting in the Boxer Codex depicting Mariana Islanders trading fresh food for iron goods. The other portion of the panel depicts islanders diving for pieces of iron dropped from the rear of the ship.
economically important tasks more efficiently and more quickly. If indigenous people valued beads, the iron drills Flores had brought would enable islanders to make these valuable goods more quickly. Trade with the Portuguese allowed people to buy new beads and to make more beads. In this context, contact was an important way for indigenous people to expand their supply of symbolic capital and was every bit as profitable as Flores’ end of the trade. Iron hatchets, needles, or fish hooks were similarly supplements to tasks Caribs and Taíno were already engaged in.

Figure 4.3: Detail from a painting in the Boxer Codex depicting Mariana Islanders trading fresh food for iron goods.

4.2 The Southwest, 1540

As men like Juan González Ponce de León settled and denuded the islands of the Caribbean, the search for gold and slaves led them in ever-widening circles out from the Greater Antilles. As we saw, his cousin, Juan Ponce de León, pushed the boundaries of Spanish presence into Florida in 1513. González himself moved westward, joining the
invasion of Mexico and experiencing another entirely different indigenous culture. The next section deals with the men who went further still, having passed through the Caribbean, the Maya and Nahua regions of Mexico, and into Mexico’s far north, the so-called Sea of Cortez; Baja and Alta California; and New Mexico. These men and women had passed through three decades of further contact, as well as the most sophisticated urban polities of North America. They were old hands in the Indies and in the processes of contact. Enticed by the reports of Cabeza de Vaca and the three other survivors of the Narváez expedition, the viceroy and other leading figures in the colony cast their eyes North and West of Mexico City.

The most interesting of these northern explorers was Hernando de Alarcón, who went up the Colorado River from its mouth in the Gulf of California. Alarcón, voyaging with a small group of Spaniards and a translator in a small boat (barca), records both his attempts at non-verbal communication and trade along miles of river in a vivid first-person narrative uncommon for the time, including, as a result, accounts of many small exchanges and his perceptions of conversations via hand signals. Though his original text has been lost, it survives in Italian via Giovanni Ramusio’s Delle Navigationi et Viaggi, and in a Spanish paraphrase by Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas. Alarcón’s interpreter was unable to translate for the first portion of the voyage, and as a result the text is a frank account of how a Spaniard with experience in the Americas would approach

192 For a discussion of the manuscript and publication history of this document see Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint, Documents of the Coronado Expedition, 1539-42 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2005). The Ramusio version of the text appeared in 1556.
communication via hand signals, as well as how his Cocopah hosts approached first contact.

The vibrancy of Alarcón’s account is also a reflection of the sophistication and vibrancy of the Cocopah he encountered. In turn, the Cocopah lived in the heart of what scholar of the indigenous Southwest Natale A. Zappia calls the “interior world,” a fantastically interconnected region running from the pueblos to the California coast. The Colorado River that served as Alarcón’s road was at the very heart of trading in the “interior world.” In Zappia’s words:

By the time Alarcón arrived in the sixteenth century, the Colorado River had attracted inter regional traders for over a century, bringing manufactured products including cotton textiles, baskets, dried deer, fish, elk, and rabbits (as well as furs), acorns, seeds, pottery, yucca, pine nuts, mescal, obsidian, mesquite beans, gourd rattles, turquoise, and even an incipient form of currency (made from shell beads). Commodities and ideas flowed along the river and through roads connecting towns sometimes as far as a thousand miles apart.¹⁹³

This river was not just a center of trade, but also of the religious landscape of the region. The Cocopah, along with fellow river dwellers and cultural cousins the Quechans and Mojave, believed that their creator Kwikumat had entered the region by coming up the river.

4.2.1 Developing an Analytical System for Nonverbal Communication

How do we begin, in any meaningful way, to examine the conversations held by hand signals and objects nearly half a millennium ago? If we accept Carayon’s premise that hand signals follow similar broad patterns across historical contexts, then we should

be able to examine kinetic expression as a series of meaningful, complex acts which can be separated and analyzed as discreet units, like sentences in a text. However, historians and other scholars of the written word have not developed an analytical methodology for dealing with extended performed communication. Mikhail Bakhtin’s concept of the speech genre, while invented for the analysis of speech, is perhaps the closest to what we are looking for. Bakhtin proposes the speech genre as a way to subdivide utterances for analysis by dividing them into sections defined by genre. Mikhail Bakhtin defines the speech genre as the following:

> Thematic content, style, and compositional structure [...] are inseparably linked to the whole of the utterance and are equally determined by the specific nature of the particular sphere of communication. Each separate utterance is individual, of course, but each sphere in which language is used develops its own relatively stable types of these utterances. These we may call speech genres.\(^{194}\)

In addition to analyzing the text, the following pages are an attempt to break down descriptions of kinetic communication into analyzable units, divided by “signal genres,” or recurring genres of performance. The following is an attempt to break the back and forth of hand signals between Alarcón and the Cocopah he encounters into a series of passages characterized by different signal genres, so that the individual units of performed communication can then be analyzed.

I break my analysis into three conversations, each roughly representing one day of interaction, and from there down into distinct instances of these signal genres, attributed to their actors. Thus, an initial attempt at greeting by Alarcón would be listed as

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“Overture – Alarcón” followed by the actual description of the signal act, which I define as a series of actions or gestures, each enacted within a specific signal genre and with a general thematic unity. Alarcón perceived non-verbal communication as being done both by individuals and collectives, which I have also done. Similarly, Alarcón addresses the signifying effect of an action, even if that was not intended by the individual or collective “speaking,” and I follow suit by allowing for intentional and unintentional signal genres. In a few key places, I will also address the literary effect Alarcón is trying to achieve with his text in places where it provides further insight into the text. These will be marked with the parenthetical [No Genre].

For the purposes of clarity, I will briefly describe the signal genres discussed below:

- Rejection – the responding group actively rejects the presence of their interlocutors, asking or ordering them to leave.
- Retreat – a rejection by avoidance, or a tactical decision to avoid conflict by avoidance. Passive.
- Acceptance – the responding individual or group actively approves of a gesture or proposition.
- Escalation – one group or individual actively increases their hostility or inclination to violence.
- De-escalation – One individual or group actively affirms their commitment to peace or nonviolence.
- Overture – active friendly gestures, such as greetings, gift giving, or embraces.
- Collective discipline – a call by leaders to present a calmer or less confrontational message as a signaling group that consciously acknowledges the role of the collective as a passive communicating agent.
- Consideration – a passive, collective message of tentative acceptance, usually defined by conversation amongst the group or eager observation.
- Demonstration – an active attempt to describe or illustrate a concept, ranging from harquebus firing to a show of reverence for a cross. Often slightly more abstract than the displays of attitude above.
• Sensory interrogation – like the example above, an active “interview” between two groups using physical objects as queries in a formal signed conversation. Members of group A respond to the objects of group B, and vice versa.
• Regroup – only used once in the source below, an active request to meet at a second location for improved comfort or safety.

4.2.2 Thursday, August 26, 1540. The Mouth of the Colorado

Collective Discipline - Alarcón’s crew

I began to ascend the river in a barca with Rodrigo Maldonado, treasurer of the armada, and Gaspar de Castilleja, contador, and with some small pieces of artillery. I gave an order to all the men that no one should move or make any gesture that I did not order them to make, should we encounter Indians.  

This is the introduction of Alarcón’s surprisingly deliberate signal strategy. By ordering his men to remain in place during encounters, he controls the message of his collective while delegating authority to himself. It also shows that he imagines that non-verbal communication will be a key part of his contact strategy, even though he has an indigenous translator.

4.2.3 Friday, August 27, 1540. 18 miles up the Colorado River

Retreat - Passive - Cocopah

...At daybreak, continuing our way upriver, I saw some Indians who were going to certain rude shelters close to the water. As soon as they saw us, some ten or twelve of them drew apart, disturbed. When they shouted loudly, others of their company came together until there were fifty. This rapidly brought those within the rude shelters outside, and they took [the possessions] they had into some thicket.

195 All of these passages come from the helpful translation of Richard Flint and Shirley Cushing Flint, and correspond to Documents of the Coronado Expedition, 1539-42, 189-91. The relevant Italian passages are in Ibid., 207-10.
As Zappia argues, Cocopah and other peoples of the Colorado River valley were accustomed to widespread raiding and participated in it themselves. They were also likely aware of the new phenomenon of Spanish slave raids, either by land or by sea, that would make them wary of Alarcón and others who looked like him.

Drawing on their previous experience of indigenous raids, the Cocopah secured both the people and property of the village, which in turn was a kind of passive signal to Alarcón and his men. This marks the beginning of Alarcón’s treatment of indigenous people as collective speakers, although he makes largely the same assumption about his own cohort in the passage above. Note, also, how Alarcón refers to the material culture of the Cocopah in an explicitly comparative way almost as another level of unintentional signaling.

**Rejection/Escalation - Cocopah**

Many of them came running toward the place we were approaching, making broad gestures that we should turn back, making violent threats, and running from one side to the other.

While there is an implied threat here, it is notable that this is in fact an attempt to forgo violence in favor of Spanish withdrawal.

**De-escalation/ Collective Discipline - Alarcón**

Having seen matters so changed, I had the barcas form in the middle of the river, so that the Indians might be reassured. I went to ride at anchor and placed the men in the best order I could, ordering that no one speak or make a gesture or any movement, or shift from his place, or show any emotion no matter what the Indians might do, or show any hostile intent. In this manner, the Indians came closer and closer to the river to see us, and little by little I went nearer to where the river seemed to be deepest.
Here, Alarcón directs his cohort/material goods to accede to demands to withdraw, while still maintaining a presence. He also reiterates the need for cohort discipline in communication, emphasizing the scope of what he considers to be a communicative act, which is nearly any outward motion or display. By forgoing hasty motion, he hopes to, and succeeds in, allaying immediate concerns and draws the Cocopah to his position.

**Escalation - Cocopah**

In the midst of this were more than two hundred and fifty Indians with their bows and arrows and with some banners like [the Indians] of Nuevo España use during war. When they saw that I was going toward land, they came in our direction with loud cries [and] with their bows and arrows drawn and banners raised.

The Cocopah assemble a force and ready their weapons in a gesture of hostility. Even accepting the likely possibility of inflated numbers on Alarcón’s part, this is a major show of force meant to deter the small landing party with the very real possibility of their death in combat.

Note how Alarcón invokes the warrior’s *pantli* (banners) of Mesoamerica to evoke a familiar comparison for his audience with explicit martial implications. This also shows that experience among Nahuas is guiding his actions here.

**Overture - Alarcón**

I went to the prow of the *barca* with the interpreter I was bringing with me [and] ordered him to speak with them.

Alarcón guesses that one indigenous man, even one from a different group, will not be perceived as an immediate threat. He also seeks to know if the translator can speak with the Cocopah.
**Consideration - Cocopah**

When he spoke, they did not understand him, nor he, them. Yet because he saw he was like them, they held back.

Alarcón believes that the translator’s indigenous appearance keeps him safe. Either the fact that he is alone, or his appearance, or the fact that he is speaking the language of a nearby group convince the Cocopah he is not an immediate threat, so they forego immediate action.

**Overture - Alarcón**

“When I saw this, I drew closer to the land.”

Given the current safety of the translator, Alarcón responds to the neutral reaction of the Cocopah and seizes on a conversational opening.

**Escalation - Cocopah**

They, with great cries, came to the edge of the river to engage me, making signs that I should not come any farther, placing stakes in the water and planting them on land.

The Cocopah do not accept this second person, arguably implying that they believe Europeans specifically to be the threat. This suggests, as noted above, that they had either experience with or foreknowledge of Europeans.

The Cocopah draw near to make their point clearer. By encompassing the space between water and land with their sticks, then slamming them down, they visually indicate that forward progress from water to land will not be permitted.

**Consideration - Cocopah**

“The more I delayed, the more people continued to come together to see.”
Alarcón’s passivity precludes further Cocopah action. The Cocopah, curious about this currently unthreatening figure, draw near to get a better view. Alarcón takes this as a tacit admission that his presence is growing more acceptable.

De-escalation/Collective Discipline/Overture - Alarcón

At this, having made up my mind, I began to make signs of peace. Taking [my] sword and shield, I threw them into the barca [which was] beached, stepping my feet onto them, making them understand by this and other signs that I did not wish to make war with them, and that they should do the same. Having seized a banner, I lowered it and had the men I had with me also sit down. Taking the items I had brought with me for trade, I summoned them in order to give them [these things].

Emboldened by their tacit acceptance of his presence along the edge of the water, Alarcón seeks acceptance of further forward progress as a foray towards conversation. Physically rejecting his weapons, he then shows contempt for them by treading on them. Having established his rejection of weapons and fighting, he encourages them to do the same, using the banner as an example. Returning to his collective, he puts them in a vulnerable, non-confrontational position before offering gifts as a form of overture.

Two things are worth noting here, one about Alarcón’s conduct and another about the “grammar” of signed communication. First, like Juan González Ponce de León, Alarcón views the exchange of gifts as an important first step in the establishment of relations. Second, paying close attention to Alarcón’s actions, we get a sense of the arrangement of symbols and symbolic action in a signal act, or, to put it in simpler terms, the sentence structure of signed communication. The basic structure is [SUBJECT + OBJECT] [OBJECT + VERB], where each bracket marks a discrete action, or perhaps clause, in the signal sequence. In the first person, the subject is implied to be the person performing the action. For example, when Alarcón foreswears violence, he signals [I +
Consideration - Cocopah

“But with all that, not one of them moved to come to take anything from me. Instead they gathered up and were talking.”

The Cocopah maintain caution but re-evaluate.

Overture - Cocopah

“A great murmur rose up among them. Suddenly, one came out from among them with a rod that bore some shells. He entered the water to give it to me.”

The Cocopah reach a decision to respond to the offer of a gift in kind, indicating acceptance of his presence and hospitality. This stick seems to be of a different kind than the ones used to deny him forward progress, and to have been some sort of prestige good. The longer sticks the Cocopah used as weapons were described as *pali* in the original Italian, whereas this object is called a *bastone*, which usually describes a cane, cudgel, or baton. Zappia argues that the shells were *pook*, the proto-currency of the region, meaning that it was a gesture of generosity as well as prestige.¹⁹⁶

Acceptance/Overture - Alarcón

“I took [the rod]. I made signs to him that he should approach me. When he had done so, I embraced him and gave him in exchange some beads and other things.”

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¹⁹⁶ Zappia, 23-4. For the original Italian description, see Flint and Flint, 207. The word used for shells (*cappe*) means hood in standard Italian, but seashells in Venetian.
Alarcón responds in kind to the Cocopah subtext of trade and deepens the overture by summoning this representative and embracing him.

**Consideration - Cocopah**

“Having returned with them to his people, he began to look at them and speak with them.”

The individual Cocopah feels the need to subject this gift to group scrutiny, and perhaps to confer once again about strategy. As experienced traders, the Cocopah were evaluating the goods, turning the tables on Alarcón’s materialist evaluation of the Cocopah.

**Acceptance - Cocopah**

“Shortly afterward, many of them came toward me.”

The Cocopah express their approval, either of Alarcón or his wares, by drawing nearer.

**De-escalation - Alarcón and Cocopah**

I indicated to them that they should lower their banners and lay down their arms, which they did at once. Then I signaled to them that they should put them all in one place and withdraw from them, which they likewise did. With this, the Indians who had been there [before] began appearing again. [The other Indians] were making them abandon their arms and put them together with the others.

This sentence marks the return to the signal grammar marked above, with similar elements but a greater level of complexity. This exchange would look something like:

[COCOPAH + WEAPON] [WEAPON + REJECT]. [COCOPAH + WEAPON] [WEAPON + GATHER]. [COCOPAH + WEAPON] [WEAPON + DRAW-AWAY].

As with spoken language, it is well within the realm of possibility that Alarcón was able to make a complex sentence of sorts, using the subject and object of clause one, sentence
one to modify a series of [OBJECT VERB] clauses, in a construction that would look like this:

[COCOPAH + WEAPON]: [WEAPON + REJECT]; [WEAPON + GATHER];

[WEAPON + DRAW-AWAY]

Overture - Alarcón

“After this, I summoned them [all] to come to me. I gave everyone who came some of the trade goods, treating them with affection.”

Alarcón repeats his previous overture for the larger group, reaffirming his previous actions and showing his appreciation.

Regroup - Alarcón

There were so many [Indians] who were crowding around me that it seemed to me I was no longer safe there. I signaled to them to return and that they should all stay by a hill that was between a plain and the river and that no more than ten should approach me at a time.

Here we return to Alarcón’s conscious attitude towards large crowds and his own safety, which seems to cause him to retreat, although he elides this specific action in his writing. This interaction is also another leap in syntactic complexity, involving multiple grammatical persons, locations, and the introduction of numbers.

Agreement - Cocopah

Immediately, the oldest of them called to them in a loud voice, telling them they should do so. Some ten or twelve of them came to me from [among] them. Therefore, I felt nearly safe.
The Cocopah correctly interpret at least the nature of his request and defer to his wishes. Alarcón infers, by the appearance of the speaker and their deferral, that he is being respected as an elder.

De-escalation/ Demonstration - Alarcón/Cocopah

I decided to go out onto the land in order to better assure them. And to make myself feel safer, I indicated to them that they should sit on the ground, which they did.

Alarcón makes himself more vulnerable by isolating himself from his group, while asking the assembled Cocopah to respond in a similar fashion, they accept.

Escalation - Cocopah and Alarcón's men

When they saw that ten or twelve of my men were coming after me onto the land, they became agitated.

Alarcón’s men, perceiving a threat to his safety, violate their standing orders. This, in turn, is perceived as a threat, or at least as a violation of the negotiated way of proceeding, resulting in collective alarm that is then perceived by Alarcón.

De-escalation/Overture - Alarcón

I signaled to them that among us there would be peace and they should not be afraid. With this they became calm, and they remained seated as they had shortly before. I drew near them and embraced them, giving them some little things.

Alarcón indicates that his men have similar peaceful intentions, reiterating the embrace and gift giving of his initial overture to show that he still felt the same way.

Overture - Alarcón

I charged my interpreter to talk to them because I wished very much to understand the means of speaking with them and what they had been shouting to me.
After this re-iteration, Alarcón attempts verbal conversation through the indigenous man the Cocopah had previously accepted. Unfortunately, he finds, the Cocopah do not understand his interpreter.

**Sensory Interrogation - Cocopah and Alarcón**

In order to find out what kind of food they ate, I indicated to them that we wanted to eat. They brought us some ears of corn and a bread made from mesquite. They made signs to me that they wanted to see an arquebus fired, which I had fired.

Following the failed effort of his translator, both sides seek to understand the material culture of the other by willing engagement with the other’s material goods. Alarcón does so by asking for and consuming food and relays these perceptions to his literary audience as part of his larger task of description and evaluation. The Cocopah do so by asking about the artillery pieces. Again, this suggests they have either familiarity with these objects or have heard stories of them. Alarcón returns the courtesy showed to him by the Cocopah. Both sides are participating in sensory interrogation simultaneously, which would seem to show that while we first saw it among European traders in the Canary Islands, it was an impulse that occurred either universally or to people used to intercultural trade.

**Collective Discipline - Cocopah**

They were all frightened and marveled [at it], except two or three of their elders who made no movements at all. On the contrary, they yelled at the others, because they had showed fear.

As Alarcón says, the loud sound and dramatic effects elicit a collective response. The Cocopah elders take this as a group display of weakness or cowardice, or perhaps that the firing of the cannon represented an unacceptable threat.
**Escalation - Cocopah**

As a result of what one of the elders said, they began to get up from the ground and pick up their arms again.

Censured by the elders, the Cocopah re-assume a defensive posture. The Cocopah elders must have deemed the cannon an intolerable threat.

**De-escalation - Alarcón**

“Wishing to appease [the leader], I attempted to give him a multicolored silk cord.”

Alarcón repeats his greeting performance with a particularly valued object, directing it specifically to the individual who caused this escalation.

**Escalation/Rejection - Cocopah (elder and individual)**

Very angrily he chewed his lower lip quite energetically, gave me a blow from his elbow in the chest, and again spoke to the people, [now] with greater furor. [The Cocopah raise their banners]

The elder pauses angrily by chewing his lip before rejecting Alarcón’s physical proximity with the blow. Following his speech, the Cocopah continue their re-armament.

**Retreat - Alarcón**

“When I saw the banners being raised, I made my mind up to return quietly to my barca.” [He sets sail]

Seeing the threat implied by the Cocopah re-armament, Alarcón retreats.

**4.2.4 Saturday, August 28. An unknown distance up the Colorado River**

Alarcón’s next day was largely a repeat of the one before. Continuing upriver, he met a group of Cocopah who could not understand him or his interpreter, but as in the previous day, he developed a rapport with them. Eventually this new group became more fond of
him, helping him tow the *barca* against the rushing current and providing food. This continued until (after the end of this analysis) he met a man who could speak to his interpreter, creating a chain of translation that allowed verbal conversation.

In this portion, I will focus on a few key passages of physical interaction between Cocopah and Alarcón that are unique to this second day. They represent, in their own way, Alarcón’s attempt to deepen his newfound relationships, and to begin to communicate increasingly abstract thought via signal.

**Sensory Interrogation - Alarcón and Cocopah**

(This comes after Alarcón establishes warm relations with the new Cocopah people he is with.)

They were coming to bring me some ears of corn and the cake I mentioned [a cake made of “poorly ground corn”]. I showed them wheat, fava beans, and other seeds to see whether they had any of those. But they indicated that they did not know about the and marveled over everything.

Here, two threads of Alarcón’s mission as both explorer and narrator converge, using sensory interrogation to learn about the Cocopah while also evaluating the quality of the meal. The Cocopah, having received him as a guest, offer him common foods. With a captive audience, and with the subject of food at hand, Alarcón shows a standard suite of European crops or seeds that he has brought with him to the Cocopah, who are curious but unfamiliar with these items. The “other seeds” part of this list seems to indicate that this sampler was created for the express purpose of showing to an audience, since Alarcón’s expedition was one of exploration rather than settlement. Once again, Alarcón
seems to have planned his expedition with non-verbal communication, and more specifically sensory interrogation, in mind.

**Demonstration - Cocopah**

“I came to understand by means of signs that what they had most reverence and esteem for was the sun.”

Though Alarcón displays a great deal of certainty here, this does, in some ways, feel like a trope. The modern Cocopah, and the related peoples of the Colorado basin do not seem to have any special regard for the sun, since their traditional creation account regards it as simply one of the many creations of a founder/creator figure. Following the standard hand signal/object communication order used in this description, the Cocopah likely pointed towards the sun and then made a gesture that Alarcón took as one of reverence or deference.

**Demonstration - Alarcón**

“I made them understand I came from the sun, about which they marveled.”

Alarcón likely echoed the Cocopah performance he had just seen, pointing to the sun as the first object, and then the place he was as the destination, implying travel. The Cocopah could have interpreted this as Alarcón being an emissary of the sun, but there are two more likely interpretations of this conversation. One possibility is a classic case of Lockhart’s Double Mistaken Identity. When Cabeza de Vaca and his fellow survivors of the Narvaéz expedition began their practice of healing, Southwestern indigenous people began referring to them as “children of the sun,” possibly as a result of the way
they had tried to explain Christianity to the Avavares. The Cocopah may have just been acknowledging Alarcón’s kinship with these famous healers, rather than expressing belief. Alarcón saw what he wanted, and began an attempt at conversion, but his signals would have constituted a positive reaction to the Cocopah’s gesture. Another is that the Cocopah asked if he came from the rising sun (East), and Alarcón confirmed this.

Alarcón and the Cocopah may have gotten what they each desired out of this conversation while not truly understanding the message of the other. Although Alarcón declares that the Cocopah “marveled,” they could have equally likely been impressed at the fact that Alarcón had come from far to the east. The first theory would seem to be confirmed by the following passage.

*Approval - Cocopah*

Now they set themselves to examining me from head to foot and showed me more affection than before. When I requested food from them, they brought so much that I was forced to lighten the barcas twice. From this time onward, they threw a part of everything they brought me toward the sun and then turned to me to give me the other part.

Alarcón clearly views these actions as confirmation of his special status in an assumed Cocopah worldview, but this lavish reaction suggests that he is perceived as a peer to Cabeza de Vaca and a healer. The presence of a healer of this magnitude in their community would have conferred honor and importance on their village to neighbors and brought them an attendant boom in attention and tribute.

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However, the other possibility, that the Cocopah were simply impressed at the distance he had travelled, and perceived Alarcón himself as a devotee of the sun, is also possible. In this scenario, having put Alarcón in his geographic context, and seeing how he reveres the sun, they are more comfortable with him, increasing their generosity to this well-travelled stranger and indulging his reverence for the sun as a show of hospitality.

[No Genre] - Alarcón

When I saw that they understood me in every way and that I, likewise, understood them, it occurred to me to see whether by some means I could give a good beginning to a successful outcome of the hopes I had.

Alarcón could, in fact, be correct that information was being transferred seamlessly, or seamlessly enough that he felt a rapport had developed. Regardless, the overwhelming generosity he had experienced had made him feel comfortable, while his small foray into more esoteric matters emboldened him to bring his own material culture and beliefs into the signaling space.

Demonstration - Alarcón

With some sticks and paper, I had some crosses made and, among those others [that is, ordinary Indians], I made it clear to them that they were things I esteemed most. And I kissed them, suggesting to them they should honor and prize them greatly and wear them around their necks, making them understand that was the symbol of heaven.

Again, Alarcón follows the signal grammar of object, attitude towards object. His linking of the cross with “heaven” likely did little to dissuade the Cocopah of his affection for the sun. In this anecdote, is attempting to introduce an object from his world into the Cocopah one, much like the sensory interrogation. This marks another leap in complexity for Alarcón’s signaling practice, creating new objects and to attempting to explain them,
which follows his previous pattern of confidence and rapport leading to increasing
syntactic complexity

**Approval - Cocopah**

They took them and kissed them and raised them high. And they showed that they
were happy and glad when they did this.

The Cocopah, here and below, continue to be enthusiastic hosts and to embrace their
visitor’s beliefs.

**Overture - Alarcón**

Sometimes I showed [the Indians] great affection by placing them in my *barca*. And at such times I presented them some of the small items I carried. The situation then developed that there was not enough paper or sticks with which to make crosses.

**4.2.5 Lessons of the Alarcón Expedition, or Getting on Board with Kinetic Communication**

Despite the sense of dis- or inability that we associate with non-verbal communication,
both indigenous people and Europeans found it to be a productive way of
communicating. This is not to say it was flawless or universally effective, as the passage
above on sun worship proves. But it is clear that experienced explorers like Alarcón took
the possibility of non-verbal communication seriously, emphasizing collective discipline
as an aspect of communication, and planning ahead for sensory interrogations by
bringing examples of the items they wished to discuss. In the same way, the elder
Cocopah who chided his people for their fear of the cannon was aware of collective
discipline as a part of non-verbal communication. In both of these situations, both
Alarcón and the Cocopah seem well aware of the idea of what I have called the collective
speaker, the idea that the conduct of groups is as much a message as the planned signed communications undertaken by individuals.

If kinetic communication, and all of these related phenomena, were serious and productive endeavors, ethnohistorians and anthropologists have no excuse in not analyzing them. As part of a corrective to that problem, I have proposed here a system for taking it seriously, for breaking down the constituent grammatical parts of signed communication and finding the philology of action. While the signal genre has provided an analogue to paragraphs, the consistent structure of signals offers us the possibility of an even finer level of analysis analogous to sentences and clauses composed of chains of action. Like Timucua, or Taíno, or any of the other languages that survive only in archival scraps, this work is hard, and the materials are few. The raw materials, the careful and methodical descriptions of human action described in Alarcón’s text, are rare, but from them we can begin to recreate lost worlds of meaning and deep experiences that were lost to us. Finding ways to describe this communication is not something that comes naturally, but the lessons we learn in this project will, like the results of the New Philology, enrich our understanding of contact in ways we had cannot predict. Lessons we learn from these good sources can enrich the bad. And if, as seems to be the case, human kinetic speech is relatively similar across the Americas, the fruits of this research will be useful to historians across the Americas, and perhaps beyond.

4.3 Tampa Bay, 1500-1549

If the language of gifts and the grammar of signals are in fact relatively stable across regions, southwestern Florida presents a valuable frontier for evaluating that evidence. As
in chapter 3, it is also a place where we can consider these issues away from permanent Spanish presence. Part of the analytical value of this region has to do with the material realities of a sandy-soiled low-lying peninsula (See figure 4.6 as an example). Chert or flint was relatively rare, and metal only existed in far-flung locales in Appalachia or the Great Lakes. There is effectively no other stone. Thanks to the extensive excavations of shell midden sites in the region, as well as this supply constraint, we can gain a very clear view of what was imported and exported both pre- and post-contact.198 This section is my attempt to write a longer story of trade and signed communication that analyzes how past trading preferences and relationships, as well as earlier contacts, affected later trade and contact. It returns to familiar stories and characters with an eye towards their sensory world, and more specifically to the way the Tocobaga and other nearby people engaged with goods and people in non-verbal or symbolic ways.

Southwest Florida in the sixteenth century sat at the end of a continent, but also at the edge of a cultural region extending far to the north and west. As Jeffrey Mitchem has argued, the Safety Harbor cultural area (Figure 4.5) was a cultural satellite of the Mississippian culture found from Ohio and Illinois to Georgia and Oklahoma.199 The clearest place to see this is in pottery styles. Archaeologists often find Florida-made pots bearing similar marks to those found throughout the Southeast. Gulf conch and whelk shells, often from Florida, are found across the Mississippian heartland as dippers, beads,

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198 This is thanks to the archaeological work of Jeffrey M. Mitchem, who has been excavating in the Tampa Bay area for the last three decades. The soil in this region is a very fine sand, with occasional small pieces of limestone or deposits of clay.

and other trade objects (see figure 4.6). In return for their shells, Safety Harbor peoples received the stone goods and exotic materials they lacked.\textsuperscript{200}

In places like Madalena’s village or Tatham Mound, a midden (shell dump) site in the northern Safety Harbor region, shell, clay, or wood were the main raw materials, but nearly all of this wood has been lost. Whelk and conch shells served as their cups and trade goods. They turned other shells into thousands of beads, mostly flat discs from outer surface, but also longer columnar beads from the central whorls of large shells. Their pots bore bird symbols of all kinds, wings, bodies, and tails similar to those from the Mississippian north (see figure 4.5). Certain jars were incised with the mace and four hands associated with northern rituals, intentionally left without a bottom for ritual reasons. More quotidian pottery was scored with stripes, incised with string, or marked with cloth or corn cob. They also had ochre (red iron oxide), which they used to dye their pots, beads, and bodies. Surprisingly, for rock-starved Florida, the area around the

\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 178-85.
\textsuperscript{201} From Ibid., 173.
northern edge of Safety Harbor culture yielded chert for arrowheads and other cutting tools.\textsuperscript{202}

This was augmented by the mineral wealth of the greater South, which added shine and luster to the wood, cloth, and earth-toned material culture of the Safety Harbor region. They traded for Shepard’s filter clam shells from the Altamaha River in Georgia, oblong and gleaming with mother of pearl, to decorate their grave sites. Elk’s teeth from Appalachia served as gleaming white pendants. But most interesting, or at least, most

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.5\textwidth]{figure4.5.png}
\caption{Engraved whelk shell pendant depicting a bird man wearing a similar pendant. Craig Mound, Oklahoma.\textsuperscript{203}}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{202} Flint deposits are present in the northern rim of the Safety Harbor culture area. See http://www.dep.state.fl.us/geology/geologictopics/rocks/chert.htm.

\textsuperscript{203} Hero, Hawk, Open Hand, 105.
dissimilar to the Floridian woodlands, were the mineral and metal goods: smooth, polished stone pendants and celts used as decoration or as tools, and faceted, glass-like quartz pendants, which in neighboring cultures were associated with luck and insight.204 There were also metals or substances with metallic lusters. One of them was galena, a lead ore whose crystals grow in abstract cubic shapes and a dark metallic shine, was used in pendants and occasionally beads. Galena also ground into glittering powders to adorn surfaces. Traders brought copper south, and the Tocobaga wore it in the form of ear spools, pendants, plates, and symbolic feather hair adornments. These came either from the small copper deposits distributed across the Southeast, or from farther away in the richer veins of Michigan.205

The would-be conquistadors of the Southeast describe Safety Harbor culture villages as worlds of wood and thatch, even if the structures themselves could attain stunning size. With archaeological analysis, we can add to that the earth tones of domestic and locally imported pottery, the rust red of ochre. Enlivening this world were the ritually significant shining things: transparent crystal, lustrous mother of pearl and galena, glinting copper, and shining stone and elk teeth. Galena, and to a lesser extent, copper, were common funeral goods.

As we saw in the previous chapter, at least one Spanish ship had crashed near Tampa Bay, while wrecks were common near the Florida Keys and Bahamas Channel.

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204 These materials are listed in the site findings for Tatham Mound in Jeffrey McClain Mitchem, “Redefining Safety Harbor: Late Prehistoric/Protohistoric Archaeology in West Peninsular Florida” (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Florida, 1989), 350-434. A discussion on the symbolism of quartz among Southeastern indigenous groups is on pages 399-402.

The disc-shaped shell beads found at Tatham Mound were suddenly augmented with similar gold and silver beads, as well as pendants, cut from the coins and ingots being sent back to Europe. These precious metals bolstered the rare supplies of galena and copper already there or were used to accent the local necklaces of disc beads. There is some evidence that this gold was re-worked in more novel ways. Cabeza de Vaca mentions a gold rattle in Tocobaga. Although lost to the archaeological record, these same ships bore other materials the appealed to Safety Harbor consumers: iridescent and colorful feathers from Mesoamerica, gleaming porcelain in white and blue, dyed cloth, and other metals such as iron and brass.\(^{206}\)

In this context, the Tocobaga funeral mentioned in the previous chapter is but one more expansion of the slow pattern of incorporation of foreign marine salvage into Safety Harbor material culture. European boxes would serve in place of Tocobaga crates; Mexican plumes would serve in the place of copper hair ornaments; salvaged gold would be galena for their funerals. Tocobaga or Safety Harbor people would, in the same way, adopt European or European-derived goods without necessarily replacing their own. They would also adopt and value them in their own terms, as we will see later.

It was these traders and salvagers that met the successive waves of visitor/invaders of the Narváez and Soto expeditions. Since these encounters were dealt with in chapter 3, I will simply take this opportunity to revisit several moments of trade and non-verbal communication I elided in those stories. It was these expeditions that brought Safety Harbor into the direct material orbit of passing Europeans. At Tatham

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\(^{206}\) This too comes from the inventory of Tatham Mound objects assembled in Mitchem, “Redefining Safety Harbor,” 434-68.
Mound, this meant the introduction of iron and glass into the flint/quartz/galena world of Safety Harbor material life. As in the Portuguese ship discussed above, beads dominated this new trade, particularly faceted ones similar to quartz, and multi-colored ones in spheres and other shapes previously rare or unavailable. Since most of these beads are of the Nueva Cadiz type, created in the Americas before 1560, we know that these were introduced by earlier traders or by the men of Narváez and Soto, rather than the permanent settlement at St. Augustine started in 1565. The fact that these beads were made in the Americas and brought by these men to Florida is proof of a growing cognizance of an indigenous market. As with the Portuguese ship, they may also have come from illicit trade. It was also at this time that iron entered Tatham Mound, as nails, a small bit of iron plate, and a chisel. The beads, with their facets and remarkable clarity, could enter into the symbolic role of quartz in this community, in exchange for food for hungry conquistadors, or for small bits of gold that themselves had originally belonged to Spaniards. The relative lack of iron at the site is surprising, although the bedraggled overland expeditions had little to spare.

In the aftermath of the Narváez expedition, Uzita, a Safety Harbor group in eastern Tampa Bay, relayed the newfound direct knowledge of European material culture into a clever plot of revenge involving materials that would not survive the centuries. In order to set an ambush for any returning Spaniards, the Uzita set a folded piece of paper at the junction of a stick cross, effectively mimicking a common Spanish symbol and a Spanish method of communication.\footnote{Dubcovsky, 36-7.} It is an important reminder that Spanish salvage
and trade goods entered indigenous villages in ways we cannot see, and that local indigenous people were quickly assimilating the symbolism of European goods.

4.3.1 Signals on the Beach

The documentary record of hand signals and indigenous/European trade begins with the Narváez expedition. His men bargained for food and used a sample of corn to inquire about finding more. Chapter 3 also dealt with the sensory interrogation of the four men from Tocobaga. To briefly recap, the only record of this meeting came as a response to a question about intelligence regarding Florida from testimony collected later. In their testimonies, the two men and two women recounted a meeting in a thatch building in Havana, in which the men were shown samples of maize and everyday gold objects like rings and shoelace tips. The men signed that these things did exist in their homeland, or at least that they knew of them, to the delight of the crowd. In classic fashion, only one of the four witnesses mention this detail that this was done via signals. The records at Tatham Mound, as well as mentions of maize in Cabeza de Vaca, put an interesting spin on this story. On the one hand, it was a classic strategy of resistance and manipulation, promising desired goods in exchange for the Spaniards retreat, or in this case, their return ride home. On the other, the archaeological record proves that their testimony was true. There was gold and maize to be had, in appreciable quantities, but the gold was itself the same gold the Spaniards were showing them, taken from mines across the Americas, and the corn came from the north, away from the Safety Harbor core.
4.3.2 One week in summer, Tampa Bay, 1549

In chapter 3, we also examined the life and work of Madalena, the extraordinary survivor and translator for the Fray Luis Cáncer expedition of 1549. The next chapter will conclude that story for Madalena, but I want to turn the spotlight to Cáncer in this section. In keeping with the pacifist strain of the Dominican order, headed by his friend Bartolomé de Las Casas, Cáncer sought to convert Florida peacefully. Cáncer’s journal is intensely honest and detailed in a confessional way, nearly as useful as Alarcón’s account. He wrote in detail about the gifts he gave and signals he made and interpreted on this frontier, and in doing so provides incidental data about Tocobaga adaptations to the recurring Spanish encounter. Cáncer’s commitment to detail, in part because of his belief that his journey would be spiritually edifying to future readers, led him to record every minute success and failure in communication.²⁰⁸ His fellow missionary fray Gregorio de Beteta would finish the journal, annotating it and recording the narrative of Cáncer’s martyrdom, cementing his place as one of the early martyrs of what would become the United States.

²⁰⁸ AGI, Patronato 19, R.4, f. 1r.
There are two stories of the role of physical goods in the contact in the Cáncer narrative: one of the deep faith of an experienced missionary in the efficacy of gifts, and the other of a Safety Harbor people, the Tocobaga, increasingly comfortable with and interested in acquiring European manufactured goods.

Story 1 begins with the long arc of Cáncer’s career in the Americas, although that story is skeletal at best. He worked for many years among the Taíno of Puerto Rico, watching the indigenous population slowly diminish until he left for the rich mission fields of highland Guatemala. There, he was a part of the music-centered attempt at conversion in highland Guatemala to be discussed in chapter 6, in which Maya merchants peddling European manufactured goods would perform a song cycle of biblical history in unconverted Maya villages. He brought this approach, in which worldly goods smoothed the path of the gospel, to his Floridian mission.

When Cáncer, Madalena, and a lay brother finally made first contact, Cáncer viewed his own distribution of gifts as a key part of contact. The Tocobaga he met also had the same idea, seeing contact both as a threat and as an opportunity for material enrichment. I present Cáncer’s thoughts and experiences below, based on the translation of John Worth.

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209 The most thorough biographical treatment of Cáncer’s life is available in Matthew Connolly, “Missionary Journey of Fray Luis Cancer, 1549” (Master’s Thesis, Catholic University of America, 1956), 1-13.


Figure 4.6: Anclote Key, a likely Cáncer campsite and a representative example of the low-lying coast of the Tampa Bay area. Photo by the author.
4.3.3 Cáncer’s Manifesto

“The pilot did not let me go. But since I considered it certain that with the interpreter, and with them giving them something, they would do no harm to the missionary, having raised my robes, without saying anything to the pilot I jumped in the water, the water to my waist. Our Lord knows the urgency with which I went so that they would not send away the missionary before having heard why we were there... And before reaching them, I did the same thing, as on the beach, and having gotten up, I began to pull out of my sleeve certain things from Flanders, which although for Christians they are nothing and of little price and value, for them it was a lot, and all very esteemed. Then they reached me, and having given away part of what I brought, I went to the missionary who came toward me and embraced me with great pleasure.”

“In order to see if I was free, and if they would let me go to the shallop, I made use of this artifice: I told them that I had more to give them, and that I was going to get it, but in truth I already had it in my sleeve, and did not wish to give it all away because I had the intention of doing this. I left and came back and found so many that came to embrace me that I could not separate myself from them. Their love and friendship are certain to believe and were more than was initially thought. For us to begin like this is the road to something else. As we have all experienced and said, works are love, and gifts lessen hardships. I was pleased that they received us well through that temporal means. The rest of the true and spiritual would come little by little, just as servile fear (of God) is considered good because afterward there occurs and enters that which is filial and true. I greatly admired how although they were all asking for beads, knives and machetes that we did not carry, they did not dare to snatch away anything of what I had in front of me, but instead when I gave it to the son of the chief to distribute, he told me through the interpreter that I should distribute it, and that this would make them happy.”

“Having arrived next to the beach, without making a signal for them to approach us, one of them entered in the ocean very boldly, so that it seemed that his life depended on it, and he arrived to give me the fish that he was carrying. I then went to give him a shirt, and since I went to give him a shirt, and since I couldn’t pull it out quickly enough, one of my companions, angrily, went to give him a tunic or blouse of his. This demonstrated that it was good to carry and have something to give them, about which I have been very poorly viewed by many for bringing them these things. Having received the shirt, another arrived with more fish, I didn’t want to receive it, and I gave him I don’t know what things that I had at hand...”

“Afterward I saw myself in great hardship containing the sailors and giving them payment for what they had given away out of what we brought. Here also the
Fathers noticed how good it had been to have been to have things to give them that I had procured and brought, and how I have never regretted it, even less now. What I now see with my eyes I first felt with my understanding, and I read it in the doctors (of the church), in particular Saint Thomas, Vitoria, Gaetano, and the decrees approve and regard it as very good to attract the pagans with good examples and gifts of minuscule things (sic), which is to say little presents like these are.”

In these passages, Cáncer elaborates on an implied argument of both Juan González Ponce de León and Alarcón, that gifts serve as a kind of social lubricant in contact, facilitating his peaceful mission and serving as a barometer of good intentions. The skepticism of his fellow friars, and the wagging tongues of the colonial bureaucracy, gives these passages a defensive feel that forces him to justify his behavior, laying out an argument more clearly than his predecessors that gifts were a necessary addition to good diplomacy. Cáncer also appeals to authority, pointing out that Thomas Aquinas, as well as sixteenth-century Dominican Thomist legal thinkers Francisco de Vitoria and Thomas Cajetan, approved of his behavior.

4.3.4 The Tocobaga Story

In their three or more decades of contact with Europeans, the indigenous people of Tampa Bay had cultivated both an appreciation of and the vocabulary for the array of European manufactured goods that entered their lives periodically. In fact, the names of these goods were the first Spanish words they seem to have learned. When Cáncer first met the assembled Tocobaga on the beach, they peaceably asked “Cuentas cuchillos

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211 According to María Angeles Fernández Cifuentes, a Golden Age literature specialist at the University of North Florida, this word (monusculos) is likely a Latinate neologism created by Cáncer, with two Latin roots that mean “little gifts.” Angeles assisted me in interpreting several words in my transcription of the original manuscript in 2010.
machetes (Beads knives machetes)?” Later, the Tocobaga gave their own gifts in return and tried out more scraps of Spanish that had entered the region through captives and passing garrisons and expeditions. Cáncer relays one encounter in which:

An Indian came out with a wand with a handful of white feathers on top, and behind him another Indian, shouting and running, saying, “Amigos amigos bueno bueno (Friends, friends, good, good).” These and other words of the Spaniards they said to us, which they must have learned from the Christians who have passed by here. Having arrived at the beach, they called us with their hands, saying “Ven aca. Espada, no. Espada, no (Come here, sword no, sword no),” as if they were saying that they were a peaceful people who had no swords.

Cáncer describes their caution in his presence, and how they each received a shirt for their generosity, and for their signaled agreement to bring Madalena and the other missionaries. Apparently aware of the success of their fellow Tocobaga in trade, “thirty well-disposed men came forth from among the pines without arrows, showing signs of peace and saying, “Espada no daca machete venaca daca camisa (Sword no, give-machete, come-here, give-shirt).” From these three passages, we can infer that the Tocobaga had learned at least the following Spanish words: No; ven (come), da (give): aca (here); bueno (good); amigo (friend); cuentas (beads); machete; espada (sword); and camisa (shirt). This list is relatively similar to the cargo of the Portuguese ship, and Spanish shirts were a common gift to Taino in the colonial Caribbean. Interestingly, their word order often matches the signal grammar mentioned above, suggesting that these new oral tools were grafted on to the structure of signals. What is unclear is whether the addition of “aca” to the verbs was meant to add a locative or object to the

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212 AGI, Patronato 19, R.4, f. 2v.
213 AGI, Patronato 19, R.4, f. 3r-3v.
214 For mentions of these tribute shirts, see AGI, Contaduria, 1072.
sentence, or whether they were simply imitating previous Spanish statements. As in 
Alarcón’s encounter with the Cocopah, the Tocobaga here make the equivalence between 
weapons and violence, and bestow gifts meant to convey some sort of dignity to an 
honored guest. Like the Cocopah, they were cautious in initiating trade.

4.4 Life in Mexico City: Miguel and the Ultimate Sensory Interrogation

On April 27, 1602, the stage was set for what must be the most remarkable 
combined performance and deposition in the history of colonial Mexico. The talent, 
Miguel, waited at the inn of Baltasar Mexia Salmeron, having come all the way from 
Etzanoa. The venue was the home of the royal factor, don Francisco Valverde y Mercado. 
The stage had been carefully set by two teams of technicians. Valverde, apparently a 
hands-on director, had ordered the royal assayer Miguel Torres to bring a

large gold ingot; smaller ingots of silver; pieces of copper; a piece of polished 
brass; some small worked pieces of jewelry with ancient figures like those that 
had been found among the Indians of this New Spain when it was discovered; 
some gold dust; and some little bits and pieces of brass that resembled gold.215 

Torres had also brought the skins of big cats and deer.

The other group of stage managers were two local Nahuas, the interpreter Jun 
Grande and the governor of Santiago Tlatelolco Juan Bautista. They were tasked with 
bringing “Indians native to this city, sent and striped and dressed for war; others with 
white and painted tilmas (men’s outfits) and others with ordinary tilmas, ... every kind of

215 AGI, Patronato 22, R. 4, f. 212r. “un tejo grande de oro y otros tejuelos de plata y pedaços de cobre y 
una de laton limpio y unas joyuelas de trabajo con figuras antiguas de las que se allaron entre los yndios 
desta Nueva España quando se descubrio y un poco de oro en polvo y unos pedacillos y grandos de laton 
que parecian de oro.”
Indian.” The elite Tlateloca wore the animal-themed armor of elite warriors and carried bows and other weapons. There were grinding stones for corn. Someone had brought turkeys and chickens, samples of maize, roses, poppies, chamomile, and carnations. There was also a pen and paper.

Miguel, of course, was the Great Plains man we encountered in the previous chapter. This was his sensory interrogation, a deposition to learn what he knew about the vast lands of the American interior, and more importantly, its metallic wealth. Miguel had learned no Spanish in his captivity, and he was apparently the only speaker of his language in Mexico City. Despite these limitations, Miguel’s testimony goes on for 20 pages. While much of it is consumed with a monomaniacal inquiry into metal and metallurgy, the larger part deals with his life, the nature of his homeland, and the resources of it. All the arrayed objects, and the Tlatelolca present, would serve as exhibits and “questions” in this lengthy sensory interrogation.

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216 AGI, Patronato 22, R. 4, f. 212r. “hiço traer a las casas de su morada cantidad de yndios naturales de esta ciudad enviados y rayados y en forme de guerra y otros con tilmas blancas y pintadas y otros con tilmas ordinarias para que se muestren al dho yndio y diga si ay de la dha gente en las dichas provincias de Nuevo Mexico y donde y de que fuerte de la dha gente los cuales dhos indios trajeron a casa del dho fator en la dha forma Juan Grande de ynterprete del juzgado de los yndios y don Juan Bautista indio governador de la parte de Santiago y el dho fator los mando poner cada genero y ? de yndios.”
Part of Miguel’s success came from the fact that he had, inadvertently or not, trained for this since birth. His first question was a map, that began as a simple schematic of the region. After subsequent questions, he added more communities, the distances between towns (which he counted using grains of corn), and an inset describing a (possibly fictitious) region where gold was traded in the middle-left of the document. The journey he had just taken is inscribed on the bottom of the page, moving from right to left, from San Gabriel to Mexico City.

Although we cannot know for certain, Miguel’s map closely resembles a cartographic tradition that stretched from the Chesapeake to the edge of the Mississippian world, near where Etzanao was. These maps, like Massimo Vignelli’s famous schematic
map of the New York City subway system, do not depict topography so much as the relationships between different social groups and urban sites. In Miguel’s map, for example, Mexico City is the largest circle, indicating that it is the most important or largest site depicted on his map. The lined road connection of Miguel’s world ends in the pueblos of New Mexico, despite his map continuing through northern Mexico, showing that the world he was in and the world he was from had no relationship. I also believe there is a strong chance that Miguel was a user of what we now call Plains Indian Sign Language (PISL). Visitors dating back to the Coronado expedition had commented upon the remarkable gift for southern Plains people in signaling, and it was in this general region that PISL emerged. If this is the case, Miguel had used signals from a young age, not only in engaging with other groups but as a part of his everyday existence.

The Spanish had built a stage full of symbols of metallic wealth. The Tlatelolca had assembled emblematic people and outfits that represented the urban Nahua, as well as the plants and tools of their domestic lives. Miguel had brought a cartographic dialect from the greater Southeast, and a formalized system of signals that he could deploy at will, to the extent that he could describe exotic phenomena like gold smelting.

Classical scholars sought the meaning of language, and evidence of its origins, in the discipline of philology. The term itself comes from the philo for love and logos, for words, arguments, or reasoning. The New Philologists look to the logos of indigenous people, to Maya and Nahua and other groups, to uncover new sources of information and

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to see how linguistic and cultural change are related. Miguel’s signs and maps, the trade preferences of Tocobaga, the metallic obsessions of Spaniards, all display their own *logos*. Although the sources on trade and signaling may be far rarer than Maya wills, if we can understand the *logos* of these systems, engage in a New New Philology, our perspective on the meaning of the past can expand in ways we cannot imagine.

As we saw, the *logos* of signaling and trade shows a kind of stability and universality that language simply does not. Beads and iron tools may have separate cultural meanings in the Mariana Islands of the Pacific and central Florida, but they are not so different as to be incomparable. If Alarcón was a skillful practitioner of sensory interrogation, the Cocopah could employ it with near equal skill. Miguel’s signal language spoke nearly as eloquently to Nahuas and Spaniards as to Wichitas and Apaches. If we develop a philology of signals using Alarcón’s account, it will tell us a great deal about the Yuman relatives of the Cocopah, but it will also shed a great deal of light on the signaling practices of indigenous and European people much farther abroad. The same can be said of trade practices. The *logos* of the senses is useful no matter where we turn, and no one group has a monopoly on the skills involved.
5 People: The Trade in Indigenous Bodies and Bilingual Minds

I have been a stranger in a strange land.

Exodus 2:22

There is an element of tragedy in the lives of the great intermediaries of the Americas. Malintzin, Cortés’ translator, had been sold from her Nahua homeland to various Maya groups before she was given as tribute to Cortés. Kateri (or Catherine) Tekakwitha, the Quebecois Mohawk saint, was orphaned at the age of four, her face and eyes marred by the same smallpox that took her family. Cabeza de Vaca had survived the near total annihilation of his expedition, as well as his own captivity, before he became the faith-healing toast of the Southwest.

This chapter is about the ways the social disruption of the conquest period, especially the indigenous slave trade, created translators and intermediaries like Miguel, Malintzin, and Madalena. It is also about how these intermediaries used their intercultural knowledge in their jobs as translators. While Miguel (and countless others) relied primarily on the visual world of objects and signs, this section focuses on the very literal lenguas (tongues/interpreters) of the colonial world.

There is no singular story of the indigenous slave trade in Latin America, at least not one that capably describes its entire history. Officially, it began in 1492 when Columbus took seven Taíno to Barcelona. A few years later, the slave trade had begun in earnest, denuding the circum-Caribbean of people to fill the “dark Satanic Mills” that were the gold mines of the Caribbean. Then, as fifty years after it began, the kings of Spain abolished the practice fifty years after it had begun with the New Laws of 1542.
But as we know, it had begun earlier, in the Canaries, and would not fully die for the duration of the Spanish empire, reborn as the result of border wars or "Chino" slavery or some other pretext. When the Spanish Southwest became the Mexican North, and then the American Southwest, indigenous slavery persisted.

Even though this “other slavery” ensnared thousands, even though the most famous of those slaves are some of the most important names of early Latin American history, we know very little of their lives. A few of these early slaves or intermediaries lived such superlative lives that they drew the attention of their contemporaries, allowing for the outpouring of primary sources that allowed for the biographies of individuals like Anton, Malintzin, or, later, Catarina de San Juan, the famously pious Asian slave of seventeenth-century Mexico. Between the biographies of the most distinguished slaves of the colonial world, and the high-level institutional history of slavery in the Americas, there is a vast analytical mid-level that is largely missing from our historical view. The problem stems from the sources themselves. Slaves, when they are mentioned at all, are usually given only the barest descriptions. They are mentioned in passing, never taking up the bulk of a document's attention. The presence of these slaves in the archive is diffuse, and the aggregate statistics we might assemble tell us precious little about them besides the bare facts of their existence.

This chapter shows how the dislocations of the slave trade, contact, and conquest, created bi- and tri- and multi-cultural individuals who made ideal translators. It focuses on basic questions of biography and social history. Where did they come from? Where did they go? What did they do in the years of their captivity? Finally, who did they meet along the way? By way of an answer, I offer two stories from the midst of the indigenous
slave trade, one micro and one macro. The micro story is the conclusion of the story of Madalena, which I use to illustrate the themes explored in the second macro story. In that second story, I examine the ebb and flow of people in the circum-Caribbean. Returning to a theme first explored in chapter 2, I try to address how diverse indigenous people interacted with one another, and how that interaction created the diverse peer groups that defined slaves’ experience of acculturation. I argue that this human churn, and the inter-ethnic and inter-indigenous contacts it generated, are key to understanding the transition from signals and trade to bilingual communication facilitated by translators.

This chapter is not the first piece to seize upon this idea of the diverse social settings of indigenous slaves. Erin Woodruff Stone's dissertation refers to these "diasporic communities" throughout, while her article on Enriquillo addresses the issue in the context of war in early colonial Hispaniola.219 Nancy van Deusen's chapter on the small Andalusian farming town of Carmona shows how even in regions far from the Indies, the indigenous slave trade forced disparate indigenous people together into new communities that would have been impossible only decades earlier.220

5.1 Fear and Loathing in Central Florida: The Captivities of Two Spaniards and Four Tocobaga

We last left Madalena around the time of her birth, when Pánfilo de Narvaéz had blown of course and landed at what is now Tampa Bay in 1527. While the bulk of this section concerns her, I wish to briefly pause to consider the one Spaniard who remained in the Safety Harbor cultural area long after Narvaéz, and who grew into that culture alongside Madalena. His name was Juan Ortiz.

In the aftermath of the Narváez incursion, the people of Uzita, a village close to Madalena’s home Tocobaga, had some small revenge for the ill-treatment they received from their new guests. Their cacique captured Juan Ortiz, a member of the rear guard of the Narváez expedition, using a false letter attached to a cross as bait. After his capture, the cacique sentenced Ortiz to death on a fiery scaffold. Before his execution, a female member of the cacique’s household intervened, asking for a pardon and for Ortiz’s acceptance into the group. Given the duty of guarding the community graves, Ortiz fought off a large wolf or panther trying to abscond with the body of the cacique’s son, which further endeared him to the ruler. Ortiz then went to live with the Mocozo for nearly a decade, carrying water and wood. Madalena grew up knowing about the strange man in the neighboring village, the foreigner who labored for them. Ortiz grew to

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222 The reader may note the similarity between this story and that of Pocahontas. Anna Brickhouse argues that this is a case of literary borrowing. The famous intercession of Pocahontas only appears in his second account of the expedition, printed 15 years after Richard Hakluyt’s publication of Elvas in translation, and Smith was apparently well-versed in conquest literature. See Brickhouse, 28-31.
223 See Elvas, 21 and Garcilaso de la Vega, 32-3.
understand his new life in Mocozo as Madalena grew to understand hers. For ten quiet years the Tocobaga could ignore the bearded men. For ten long years, Ortiz waited for them.

5.1.1 Taken: Madalena’s Story, part II

In late 1538, months before Madalena's capture, three Spanish ships appeared and captured four men, leaving as soon as they had come. Hernando de Soto needed translators and informants for his entrada. Juan de Añasco, one of Soto's lieutenants and the contador (accountant) of the potential province of La Florida, brought the captives to Havana. Where they were shown objects of interest to Spaniards (namely corn and gold) and asked if they were familiar with them. This was done via gestures, because the men could not yet speak Spanish, having only been in custody for the short journey from Tampa Bay to Havana. In the months to follow, living in the workaday world of Havana, they apparently picked up enough Spanish to be considered as guides for the expedition.

The force of Spaniards under Hernando de Soto made landfall near Uzita. Plumes of smoke erupted up and down the coast as the local people warned each other of the arrival of the strangers. Poorly guarded, the four indigenous men escaped. Upon finding them gone, two raiding parties fanned out. One party, under Baltasar de Gallegos, found Juan Ortiz, stuttering with fear and struggling to remember his native Spanish. Another party, under Captain Juan Rodríguez Lobillo, went into the interior, where they captured several women. Madalena was likely one of them.

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224 See Oviedo, 545-7 and Elvas, 19-20.
The Tocobaga fought fiercely to get Madalena and their other people back.

Perhaps remembering the four men, perhaps having heard their stories, the Tocobaga sent out a party to try and retrieve them, moving fast and light through the woods, pelting Lobillo's men with arrows. Rangel, the author of one of the primary accounts of the expedition, devotes nearly an entire page to their valor.\textsuperscript{225} Despite killing one man, and wounding several others, they did not get her back, nor the other women. Madalena’s captors placed her in a hut in the newly ravaged village of Uzita, whose buildings had been demolished to make temporary huts for the soldiers.\textsuperscript{226} For a width of two arrow shots in every direction, the ground was nothing but stumps, bedraggled vines, and wood chips. The Spanish had cut them down to deny the people of Uzita cover if they tried to retake their village. Europeans often branded slaves after capture, although there is no reference to Madalena being branded in later documentation.

Lobillo's raid was not the last, and the ranks of captives grew, albeit more slowly than Soto and his men wanted. These men were experienced slavers. Soto, in addition to helping conquer Panama and Peru, had been the owner of a slave ship in Central America.\textsuperscript{227} Former Cuban colonial official Vasco Porcallo de Figueroa left, frustrated by

\textsuperscript{225} Oviedo, 545-7.
\textsuperscript{226} Branding was used as a way to unambiguously mark indigenous slaves as property, particularly when claims to and the legality of such slaves were questionable. For a thorough discussion of branding of indigenous slaves, see van Deusen, \textit{Global Indios}, 133-40.
\textsuperscript{227} See Murdo F. McLeod, \textit{Spanish Central America: A Socioeconomic History, 1520-1720} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), 50-2. Isabel de Bobadilla’s father Pedrarias Dávila and Soto’s business partner Hernán Ponce de Leon were also involved in the Central American indigenous slave trade.
the lack of slaves already captured and quarreling with Soto.\footnote{Elvas, 25-7.} The Tocobaga took a Spanish man named Juan Muñoz, perhaps as revenge for Madalena’s capture.\footnote{Garcilaso de la Vega, 121-3.}

Madalena's road to Havana is unclear. Later texts that mention her origins elide this information. Prince Philip, relaying the contents of a letter sent to him by Isabel de Bobadilla, only says that Madalena and two other men "were taken to her [from Florida]."\footnote{“a ella le fueron traydo de la dicha provincia dos yndios e una yndia.” See Philip II to the Council of the Indies, “Averiguación sobre ciertos indios,” 1545, AGI, Indiferente 1963, L.9, f. 221r-221v.} Cáncer mentions in a letter that a pilot named Juan López recalled bringing three men and one woman “of the coastal language” to Havana on the orders of Hernando de Soto, but he does not mention López’s port of origin.\footnote{Luis Cáncer to Bartolomé de Las Casas, undated, AGI, Patronato 252, R.11, f. 9v. This source is a letter from Luis Cáncer to Bartolomé de Las Casas describing his preparations for his expedition to Florida.} Madalena once stated that she was from Tocobaga, but nothing more is recorded. The four main chroniclers of the mission give next to no attention to the lives of camp followers, or of women in general.

Given these silences, we have to construct a likely sequence of events based on the chronicles. Displeased by the lack of gold and human capital to be found in Tampa Bay, Soto and his followers turned north towards Apalache, where they had heard there were large supplies of maize and gold. A small rearguard garrison of 60 footmen and 23 horsemen remained at the camp at Uzita, and Madalena remained with them, since they needed local interpreters and laborers to supply them.\footnote{Luis Hernández de Biedma, in Chronicles, vol.1, 226.} They remained there until the early winter, when Soto prepared to leave for the north. Juan de Añasco returned by ship to order the garrison to head north as quickly as possible, traveling lightly.\footnote{On Añasco’s return, see Ibid., 227-8, Elvas 27-35, Garcilaso de la Vega, 98-141, and Rangel in Chronicles, 257-75. Though all of these accounts vary in their particulars, they all agree on a general narrative for this time period.}
men arrived in Apalache in early 1540, Soto sent a ship captained by Maldonado back to Havana. Soto sent his wife several indigenous slaves to enrich their house and to learn Spanish, and Madalena was likely one of them.

In the midst of this, Madalena spent the traumatic early months of her captivity only a few miles from her home, cooking the same foods and seeing the same mangroves, beaches, and pines as in Tocobaga. But there was also laundry to do, a new language to learn, a captivity to mourn. Then, a hard march north, where she witnessed a great deal of violence and where her work became more necessary to the functioning of camp life.

She lived in constant danger and uncertainty. As the Gentleman of Elvas relates, “there, as well as in any other part where forays were made, the captain selected one or two for the governor and the others were divided among themselves and those who went with them.” In the terror and dislocation of these camps, with the constant threat of rape, in the creaking holds of the boats that she would ride, Madalena entered a much larger and more threatening Atlantic world.\(^{234}\) She may have learned to prepare corn from women from northern groups she had only heard of. She may have been forced into the bed of the Spaniards she had only heard about until then. She learned her first words of Spanish and saw horses for the first time. In an atmosphere of sexual violence and hard labor, Madalena joined the fellowship of thousands of women uprooted by an expanding empire and went by ship down to Havana to live among her captors.

\(^{234}\) Nancy van Deusen, in her article "The Intimacies of Bondage: Female Indigenous Servants and Slaves and Their Spanish Masters, 1492-1555," *The Journal of Women's History* 24:1 (2012): 14, describes this moment of terror and acculturation beautifully, saying: “march[ing] behind the conquerors; they became sexual objects and partners, laborers, and caretakers for men at sea … just as much a part of the mobile early Atlantic world economy as Spaniards.”
5.1.2 In the Governor’s House

Madalena’s experience of transition from Florida prisoner to Havana slave is unknowable, but we can speculate. Van Deusen argues that however disruptive their imprisonment and assault was, the partnerships between conquistadors and their sexual partners set the tone and contours of early colonial life. Yet Madalena’s time in a female-run household must have been a significant disjuncture in this experience. Bobadilla, her new mistress, may possibly have been vicious and cruel, but Madalena was no longer chained, or hurried along the road, or subject to the depredations of so many strange men. She may not have been safe, but life in Havana was less tumultuous. In her transition from newly imported pieza to a criada of the household, did she think of Ortiz as a model for life as a servant among strange people?

Havana was one of the many Caribbean cities drained of colonists who had left to conquer places like Colombia, Florida, and Mexico. It had yet to turn into the major Atlantic port it would become by the end of the century, and was instead a sleepy entrepôt. In the testimony mentioned above, former settlers estimated that the village

236 The inquiry into the treatment of Madalena and the two Florida men would seem to argue against this, but Bobadilla was from a powerful family well-ennmeshed in Indies affairs. See “Averiguación sobre ciertos indios,” 1545, Indiferente 1963, L.9, f. 221r-222v.
238 The history of sixteenth-century Havana, and of the larger island of Cuba at the time, is understudied. Alejandro de la Fuente, an academic trained in Cuba who currently works in the United States, attributes this to the fact that post-revolutionary Cuban historiography has sought the origins of the slave-driven sugar export economy, and has viewed the period before as prehistory. See Alejandro de la Fuente, "Sugar and Slavery in Early Colonial Cuba," Tropical Babylons: Sugar and the Making of the Atlantic World, 1450-1680 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 115-157. Many works deal with this period in passing, however. The first, and perhaps most comprehensive, is Irene A. Wright, Historia Documentada de San Cristóbal de La Habana en el Siglo XVI, vol.1-3 (Havana: Imprenta El Siglo XX, 1927), which combines transcriptions of primary sources with short essays. Beginning in 1937, Havana’s city historian
had between fifteen and twenty vecinos (heads of household), in part because French
corsairs had recently burned the settlement to the ground, visiting Havana on their way
from raids in Panama.\textsuperscript{239} Diego de Sarmiento, the bishop of Santiago de Cuba, passed
through Havana on an inspection of the island in 1544. He declared that the settlement
had forty married and unmarried European men, 120 local Taino naborías (Tainos bound
to servitude, but not technically slaves) and 200 indigenous and African slaves.\textsuperscript{240}
Regardless of the precise numbers, Havana was an indigenous and African community
far more than it was a Spanish one, and those Taino, fellow foreign indigenous slaves,
and Africans would constitute the majority of her friends and social contacts.

In terms of the physical setting of Madalena’s captivity, the Gentleman of Elvas
describes the island of Cuba as a fecund wilderness overrun by the plants and animals of

\begin{verbatim}
Emilio Roig de Leuchsenring published transcriptions of the meeting minutes of the town council from
1550-1578, beginning about a year after the end of this article, along with an introductory volume that
draws heavily on Wright’s work. See Actas Capitulares del Ayuntamiento de la Habana, 1550-1565.
Havana: Municipio de la Habana, 1937 and subsequent volumes. Levi Marrero’s comprehensive multi-
volume history Cuba: Economía y Sociedad, vol. 1 (San Juan: Editorial San Juan, 1971), briefly deals with
demography and famous citizens. Hortensia Pichardo Viñals has also compiled primary sources dealing
with the settlement of other regions of Cuba in her book La Fundación de las Primeras Villas de la Isla de
Cuba (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1986). I rely most heavily on Alejandro de la Fuente’s
recent work, including the opening chapter of Havana and the Atlantic in the Sixteenth Century, (Chapel
Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008) and his demographic article "Población y Crecimiento
en Cuba (Siglos XVI y XVII): Un Estudio Regional," European Review of Latin American and Caribbean
Studies 55 (December 1993): 59-93. I also make extensive use of the testimonies included in “Ponce de
Leon contra Bobadilla,” Justicia 750B, N.1, in which former residents of Havana describe the city in their
own words.
\textsuperscript{239} The effects of the raid are described in passing in “Ponce de Leon contra Bobadilla,” Justicia 750B, N.1,
f.1504v-1532r. Kris Lane describes this series of French pirate raids in 1536-7 in Pillaging the Empire:
\textsuperscript{240} Diego de Sarmiento, “Carta del Obispo al Emperador dando cuenta de la visita hecha a las villas y
iglesias, y del estado en que se hallan” in Real Academia de la Historia, Colección de Documentos Inéditos
Relativos al Descubrimiento, Conquista y Organización de las Antiguas Posesiones Españolas de
Ultramar, series 2, section 6, volume 3. (Wiesbaden, Germany: Knaus Reprint Limited, 1967), 231. The
original reads “Visité esta iglesia. Hay 40 vecinos casados y por casar. Indios naborías naturales de la isla
120; esclavos indios y negros 200.” In 1554 the town was defended from a pirate attack by 220 indigenous
men, 80 African-descended men, and only 35 Spaniards. See Alejandro de La Fuente, Havana, 1-7.
\end{verbatim}
former settlers; overgrown with plantains, guava, citrus, and cassava; overrun with cattle and pigs so numerous they made their own roads; and filled with packs of newly wild dogs that stalked them.\textsuperscript{241} Irene Wright describes the countryside around Havana as a place where settlers hunted cows instead of raising them, turning them into jerky for Spain’s fleets.\textsuperscript{242}

If the land itself was giving and rich, the \textit{encomenderos}, the men assigned indigenous laborers by the crown, were not.\textsuperscript{243} The Taíno, despite their large and continual presence during Madalena’s time in Havana, were only a remnant of their former numbers. The enslaved indigenous people around Madalena were a diverse diasporic community whose members came from as far away as present-day North Carolina and Brazil.\textsuperscript{244} Many of these were Maya from the nearby Yucatán and captives from elsewhere in the Caribbean.\textsuperscript{245}

Isabel de Bobadilla was among the most well-connected and elite women in the Americas. Her contemporary Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo (despite his apparent disdain for her husband) described her as “a woman of great worth and goodness, of courtly judgment and personage.”\textsuperscript{246} While she was newly married to the \textit{adelantado} of Florida and a conqueror of Peru, she brought livestock, property, and income from Panama and

\textsuperscript{241} \textit{Chronicles}, vol. I, 52-4.
\textsuperscript{242} Wright, 9.
\textsuperscript{243} Unfortunately, the historiography of Cuba’s \textit{encomiendas} is rather undeveloped. For a general overview of Spanish labor forms and households on the island, see de la Fuente, “Población.” For primary descriptions of Cuban encomiendas, see the account books related to the gold mines of the island contained within “Cuentas desde que se pobló Cuba hasta 1577,” 1529-1577, AGI, Contaduria 1174 and the debates about labor arrangements and indigenous autonomy on the island in “Capacidad de los indios para autogobernarse: Cuba,” 1531, AGI, Patronato 177, N.1, R.12.
\textsuperscript{244} Woodruff Stone, 54.
\textsuperscript{245} Ibid, 261.
\textsuperscript{246} “muger de gran ser é bondad é de muy gentil juiçio é persona.” Fernández de Oviedo, 544.
Tierra Firme into her marriage through her inheritance.\textsuperscript{247} She was the daughter of Pedrarias Dávila, former governor of Tierra Firme.\textsuperscript{248} She was also well connected to her husband’s men and their wives, having known several of them since childhood.\textsuperscript{249} In her husband’s absence, she became acting governor of Cuba, and looked after her husband’s property there. She also housed at least four of the wives of elite conquistadors, one of whom was pregnant.\textsuperscript{250} Bobadilla had to administer the island of Cuba as well as her own house, dealing with murders of prominent citizens, problems with the bishop, and, in her husband’s absence, completing a new fort to guard the harbor (Figure 5.2).\textsuperscript{251} She had also recently arrested her husband’s business partner Hernán Ponce de Leon for financial crimes, sparking a series of legal struggles between them that would continue for over a decade. In this busy house, teeming with people and with power, Bobadilla desperately needed Madalena’s labor. Even as Madalena adjusted to the shock of her second dislocation, Bobadilla forced Madalena to attend to the problems and needs of her owner first.

\textsuperscript{247} Adelantados were granted a series of major economic and political concessions in order to encourage them to conquer frontier regions of the Spanish empire. After their successful conquest, they would become governors of these territories. See Eugene Lyon, \textit{The Enterprise of Florida: Pedro Menéndez de Avilés and the Spanish Conquest of 1565-1568} (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1983), 220-3.

\textsuperscript{248} Juan de Añasco appeared as a witness when her mother bequeathed her property on the occasion of her marriage. See her dowry agreement in \textit{Chronicles}, vol. 1, 357. Catalina Ximénes, wife of Rodrigo Rangel, had known both mother and daughter for decades. See “Ponce de Leon contra Bobadilla,” Justicia 750B, N.1, f.1526r.

\textsuperscript{249} \textit{Chronicles}, vol. 1, 357.

\textsuperscript{250} Ibid., 50-7.

\textsuperscript{251} This kind of leadership role was not entirely unusual for elite Spanish women, especially following the absence or death of their husbands. See Grace E. Coolidge, \textit{Guardianship, Gender, and the Nobility in Early Modern Spain}, (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2011). For correspondence relating to her governorship, see Andrés de Parada to Isabel de Bobadilla, April 10, 1540, AGI, Santo Domingo 99, R.2, N.13 and Andrés de Parada to Isabel de Bobadilla, October 12, 1540, AGI, Santo Domingo 99, R.2, N.14. While Soto was originally ordered to construct the fort, his wife was issued an order to complete it in his absence. For the original order and the follow up order to Bobadilla, see Charles V to Hernando de Soto, October 7, 1540, AGI, Santo Domingo 1121, L.2, f.179r and Charles V to Isabel de Bobadilla, October 7, 1540, AGI, Santo Domingo 1121, L.2, f.179v.
When Madalena arrived at what became her home for the next three years, it was a compound of two thatch-roofed houses, one for Bobadilla’s household and one for storage, “bounded by mayor Francisco Cepero’s house on one side, and by Juan Marqués’ house and public streets on the other.”\(^{252}\) There, she became enmeshed in the indigenous and African slave community of Havana, forming a circle of acquaintances.\(^{253}\) Madalena met the African slaves Joanillo and his wife Francisca, Manuel, Domingo, Hernando, Jorge, and Julián, along with a few of their children. Bobadilla had brought with her at least three “esclavas blancas” (*Morisca* or North African slaves), including

\(^{252}\) *Chronicles*, vol. I, 490.
\(^{253}\) Van Deusen, 34-63.
one named Isabel who worked as a personal attendant to her namesake. As simultaneous insiders and outsiders to Spanish life, did these Africans and *moriscas* sympathize with Madalena's sense of displacement? Despite the babel of tongues and of peoples, this village was not so different in size or appearance from the one she came from, a cluster of thatch houses huddled by an interior bay. Even the ubiquitous lizards of the tropical midday, bobbing their head and puffing their throats, were similar, although in Cuba they were brown instead of green. The space between the two houses was open to the world, and she and the servants were allowed some mobility, making connections with the people of Havana.

Confronted with these new faces and forced to work as a member of this household she barely understood, Madalena rapidly learned about the Spanish world. She learned the finer points of Spanish, being quite fluent by the time of the Cáncer expedition. A later investigation concluded that she had been “indoctrinated in our Holy Catholic Faith,” which meant she at least knew her basic prayers. In the storeroom and the main house, she was surrounded by Catholic material culture. They contained devotional prayers to the Virgin Mary, rosaries, a crucifix, a baptismal font, and a set of vestments for mass that were kept in the house and presumably used there. She

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255 The Cuban brown form of these lizards (called anoles) are now the most common one in the state of Florida, after being introduced in the late 19th century. See Susan L. Woodward and Joyce A. Quinn, “Brown Anole” in *Encyclopedia of Invasive Species: From Africanized Honey Bees to Zebra Mussels* (Santa Barbara: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2011), 214-7.

256 “Averiguación sobre ciertos indios,” 1545, Indiferente 1963, L.9, f. 221.

257 See property inventory in Solar y Taboada and Rújula y de Ochotorena, 227-240.
attended mass in the one thatch _bohío_ church of Havana with its one parish priest, not so
different from a Tocobaga home, at least architecturally. Stone churches did not yet exist
in the small village of Havana.\(^{258}\) If she was baptized after her arrival, it may have been at
the same font that stood in her home, or in the _bohío_ church, under the watch of the same
priest that said mass every Sunday.\(^{259}\) If Bobadilla stood as her godmother, she would
have been Madalena de Bobadilla, marked as property and as family in a three-word
pronouncement, a clumsy assemblage of syllables that was as ill-fitting as her new
Spanish clothes.

What Christianity meant to her is impossible to know. Perhaps, with their
emphasis on processions, boxes, and supplication similar to Tocobaga funerals, Castilian
funerals held a special resonance. She would have reason to attend many of them during
her captivity. Perhaps, to return to the story from Apalache, the death, resurrection, and
covenants of Catholicism made a certain amount of sense. She certainly learned the style,
whether or not she embraced the substance, of mass and the appropriate way to adore the
cross. When she was with Cáncer, she knew when to kneel during the recitation of the
litanies. She could also lead her own rituals, as she later did in Florida. Perhaps, like the
Latin prayers she memorized, Castilian religion was merely rote action rather than belief.
Perhaps it was a deep form of solace in a chaotic life.

As Madalena settled into life in exile, the needs of Isabel de Bobadilla and her
guests dominated her life: their baths, their laundry, their meals, their crops, whatever it

\(^{258}\) Wright, 21.
\(^{259}\) Havana’s church had one cleric and a sacristan, a person entrusted with the material trappings of church
ritual, as of 1544. See the bishop’s report quoted above in _Colección de Documentos Inéditos_, 231.
was that needed doing. Madalena and the other captives learned a bewildering array of new items and their care. They had to learn to prepare cassava, polish copper and silver, and care for nearly every kind of fabric imaginable. Bobadilla’s storerooms overflowed with worked silver from her dowry, velvet, wool, silk, linen, bedding, hoop skirts, leather, and tapestries; as well as swords, artillery, pots and pans, and bits and bobs of high-end goods, ranging from civet perfume and pearls to gold nails. This new arcane knowledge was key to Madalena's success in her new home. If she could remove wine stains from dresses, dab just the right amount of perfume behind her mistress’ neck, and make good bread, she would become a valuable member of the household.

5.1.3 Adrift in the Atlantic

Madalena had little choice in beginning the second sea voyage of her life, enmeshed as she was in new networks of kinship, labor, and dependence. The only indigenous people who came to Spain entirely of their own volition were high-ranking elites seeking concessions or diplomatic agreements with the king. Indigenous servants like Madalena became vital portions of the family unit and traveled with it. Isabel de Bobadilla had to return to Spain, and so did her servants.

Madalena boarded that ship as part of the Bobadilla’s retinue, but the actual cause of her second journey was the death of Hernando de Soto on the banks of the Mississippi in 1542. Word of his death slowly travelled back to Bobadilla, and when it arrived, she

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260 For a perceptive discussion of this transition, see van Deusen, “Intimacies,” 19-21.
arranged her affairs, sold her husband’s property in December of that year, and left the following spring. Rodrigo Rangel, one of the chroniclers of the expedition and the husband of one of Bobadilla’s houseguests, bought the property. Madalena, Isabel the morisca, and other members of Bobadilla’s entourage made the long journey back to Spain. Bobadilla intended to resettle in the Castilian city of Segovia, where she had grown up, and where Madalena would live out the rest of her years serving her.

For the second time in five years, Madalena reckoned with a new place. She would be among some of the members of her household, but even farther away from her original home. Unlike her time in the open spaces and thatch houses of Havana, in Seville she worked in airless interior kitchens and in household courtyards, the interior balconies of the second story providing a vantage point from which her work could be observed. The sheer size of Seville likely exhausted her, as the similarly sized city of London exhausted European and indigenous visitors in later centuries. Perhaps, like Inuit visitors to London, she compared Seville’s outsized cathedral to familiar things: to the large meeting houses of her youth, or to the arcing branches of ancient live oaks. Perhaps words failed her.

Bobadilla, watching Madalena from above, became embroiled in a series of legal proceedings. Upon their arrival, the officials of the Casa de La Contratación (Board of Trade) confiscated the worked silver that constituted part of Bobadilla’s dowry, which

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264 Coll Thrush makes the point that travelers, both indigenous and not, found London exhausting, and Seville was of a similar size to London during the early modern period. See Thrush, 71.
Madalena had likely polished. Officials thought it was undeclared wealth.\textsuperscript{265} This same inspection threw Madalena and the two Florida men into legal limbo, since their arrival violated a 1543 law that banned the importation or migration of any indigenous people from the Americas to Spain.\textsuperscript{266} Bobadilla, if found guilty, would have to pay the full cost to return Madalena to her home province as well as a 100,000 \textit{maravedí} fine. If Bobadilla was found to be abusive, Madalena and the men would be put in protective custody (called \textit{depósito}) in a stranger’s house. In addition, indigenous slavery had been outlawed in 1542.\textsuperscript{267} The wrinkle, however, was that Madalena was from a province that, from a Spanish legal perspective, did not exist. Madalena could dream of the return home, perhaps she was even told that it was a possibility, but she had to wait on the decision of the prince and of the Council of the Indies. Meanwhile, she tended to Bobadilla, and to her temporary home.

Prince Philip, the future king, took notice of Bobadilla’s many legal troubles, and began to issue letters to resolve them. The case of Madalena’s freedom, and her proper place in the Spanish empire, would wait for three more months. On February 7, 1543, Prince Philip asked that Bobadilla’s silver be returned, since it was her property.\textsuperscript{268} Philip issued a summons on Bobadilla’s behalf, inaugurating a nine-year case with her

\textsuperscript{265} Philip II to the officials of the Casa de La Contratación, “Entrega de bienes a Isabel de Bobadilla,” February 7, 1545, AGI, Indiferente 1963, L.9, f.172v.
\textsuperscript{266} van Deusen, \textit{Global Indios}, 109.
\textsuperscript{267} On the \textit{depósito}, see Ibid., 23.
\textsuperscript{268} “Entrega de Bienes,” 1546, Indiferente 1963, L.9, f.172v.
husband’s former business partner, now a councilman (veinticuatro) in the city of Seville.  

Finally, on the seventh of May, Philip dealt with Madalena’s legal quandary. Bobadilla had informed him that these three Florida natives had lived in her house and been properly instructed in the faith. The prince decided that Madalena and the two men would better serve the empire as potential translators, and that to allow them to return to their homes in Florida would be to lose an important piece of the crown’s property. Administratively, the prince added, there was no province of Florida to send them to. The prince ordered the officials of the Casa to verify that the Floridians were not slaves and to give them back to Bobadilla, who would hold them in trust until the empire had need of them again. Technically, this freedom hearing was Madalena's right as an American indigenous person in the Spanish empire. Madalena would have testified before the judges of the Casa, but these proceedings, and their judgments, are lost. She remained in the house of her former owner. Madalena’s body no longer belonged to Bobadilla, but her mind, and the knowledge she had worked so hard to gain in the last six years, were property of the Spanish state.

The treatment of displaced persons as royal patrimony was a rich Iberian tradition, dating back to Portuguese expansion into Africa and continuing through the
intervening decades. The twin programs of penal exile and kidnapping of potential interpreters that emerged on the African coast had developed into a rich tradition by the time the Portuguese settled in Brazil. In the early years of the Spanish colonies, high-ranking indigenous people and slaves from new frontiers were purposefully taken to Seville or Spanish cities in the new world for their education in the basics of Spanish and Catholicism, often under the eye of Spanish clerics or nobles. Given the scale of indigenous slavery in the preceding years, and the number of elite indigenous pupils and visitors in the city, Madalena likely met even more diverse indios, some coming from Portuguese East Asia.

Madalena faced lonely and trying years after her win and loss in court. Bobadilla died in 1546, and how Madalena returned to Havana is a mystery. She may have traveled with Isabel the morisca in 1546, who returned to her husband in Havana along with her children. If she remained in Seville, Madalena risked being re-enslaved. Once separated from their original masters and social networks, indigenous servants often struggled to prove that they were either indigenous or free. Whether in Havana or Seville, she would have to draw on her existing connections (perhaps to Bobadilla’s mother and sister in Spain) to survive, likely continuing her work as a domestic and personal servant in houses in Seville or Havana.

By the time Madalena returned to Havana, Luis Cáncer was struggling to find a translator for his mission. He wished to peacefully convert the indigenous peoples of

272 Metcalf, 17-55.
274 Van Deusen, “Coming to Castile,” 285-308. Seijas notes similar struggles faced by Filipinos and other Asians in Mexico.
Florida and bring them into the Spanish empire, and a translator was key to these persuasive efforts. His frustrations emerge in his correspondence with his mentor and former supervisor, Bartolomé de Las Casas. Cáncer had met several Floridians during his mission work in Guatemala. Survivors of the Soto expedition had brought them there. None of these people could be found. In a series of long meetings between Juan López, the former pilot of the Soto expedition, and Cáncer, the pilot revealed that he had taken four Floridians to Havana. A man named Santana informed Cáncer that only one woman, presumably Madalena, remained. Cáncer, whether concerned about propriety or filled with sexist doubt about Madalena’s ability, wrote that he would not bring her with him “for all the world.” At the behest of his colleagues and because of the lack of male translators, Cáncer eventually relented.

These letters, beyond fleshing out her story, reveal a startling truth that must have weighed on Madalena through these years: Madalena was the only indigenous person from the coast of Florida left in the Spanish empire. The men who went to Spain with her were gone. They had died in the previous two years. She had not met the Guatemalan Floridians, but the other Floridians in Havana were also dead or gone. Her mistress was dead, and Bobadilla’s family remained in Spain. Beyond Isabel the morisca, or other acquaintances in Havana, Madalena was radically alone. However much choice she had in the matter, she had an opportunity to leave her life of service and isolation and to use

275 Royal Decree of 1547, reproduced in Fray Antonio de Remesal, Historia de la Provincia de San Vicente de Chyapa y Guatemala (Madrid: Francisco de Angulo, 1619).
276 Cáncer to Las Casas, Patronato 252, R.11, f.9v. “Yten dize que en Mexico no hay lenguas a lo que el es de la costa de la Florida de nosotros hemos de yr sino de la tierra adentro y que en la Havana ay quatro yndios esclavos e por mandado de Soto que saben la lengua de aquella costa y que por los estos convenia mucho llegarnos a la Havana. Santana dize que no hay mas de una yndia y yo dixe que no la llevaria por todo el mundo. Respondieron todos que si no avia yndio que convenia mucho llevarse.”
her knowledge of Spanish religion and the Spanish language. If she believed fervently in her new faith, it was an opportunity to work on behalf of her new God, and to spread his ways to her people. Most importantly, it was a way back to a more familiar place, and possibly even to her former home.

5.1.4 Madalena, La Lengua

In keeping with Spanish practices at the time, Cáncer wrote Madalena out of the narrative he constructed about his mission to Florida. In his rendering, Cáncer communicated directly with the people he encountered, rather than speaking through Madalena. Still, she emerges between the lines and in small details. Though Madalena only had a few days to teach the friars some basic words in her language, she taught her pupils a particular phrase – *he oçavluata* – that according to Cáncer meant “we are good men.” In light of her childhood, and the depredations of the Narváez and Soto expeditions, this phrase (if it meant what Cáncer thought it meant) seems especially useful. If she believed in the content of the mission, *he oçavluata* served as a kind of Tocobaga shibboleth, a way to confirm that these Spaniards were different.

After ten years abroad, Madalena came home, or very close to it. The expedition spent days searching for the entrance to Tampa Bay. The shallow water of the Gulf forced them to reconnoiter the coast in a smaller boat. Even a mile out to sea, the Gulf may only be six feet deep. For days, she could see land tantalizingly close to her home, even sleeping on an island just off the coast. Finally, after those long days, she stood on

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277 For a more thorough description of this pattern, see chapter 5 of Restall, *Seven Myths.*
278 “Jornada,” 1549, AGI, Patronato 19, R.4, f. 3r.
the shore with fray Diego de Tolosa and a hired hand named Esteban de Fuentes, who
had volunteered to see if the Tocobaga were hostile.279

After making landfall, Madalena became the translator the prince had imagined
her as. Cáncer came up behind her as a crowd of Tocobaga gathered, and she fell to her
knees on the beach next to her new employer as he said the litanies from a book. Her
people kneeled and laid down around her, perhaps following her lead. They moved to
what Cáncer called a barbacoa, likely a grate for smoking fish, where she began speaking
on his behalf. She figured out where the entrance of the bay was, trying the words of her
language for the first time in several years. She told the Tocobaga of Cáncer’s “intents
and desires” to preach among them, peacefully. Or perhaps she had her own words to say.
As Cáncer began to distribute some small gifts, she pointed out the brother of the chief so
that a native leader could distribute them. Perhaps she remembered this man from her
childhood, or perhaps she spoke to him in her language. Before Cáncer left, Madalena
“seeing such peace, was very happy, and said to [him], ‘Father, I didn’t tell you, that as I
spoke to them, they won’t kill you. They are from my land, and this is from my
language.’”280 Cáncer left the two friars and her to make contact while the ship found the
entrance to Tampa Bay.

279 Fuentes’ identity is something of a mystery. In Agustín Dávila Padilla, Historia de la Fundación y
Discurso de la Provincia de Santiago de México (Brussels: Casa de Ivan de Meerbeque, 1625) and
Remesal, he is described as a lay brother. However, Cáncer only describes him as a “good man” and only
lists his last name. Following the analysis of Matthew Connolly, who consulted the financial records of the
expedition, I believe Fuentes to be Esteban de Fuentes, a salaried agricultural worker hired to support the
mission. For more, see Matthew Connolly, “Missionary Journey of Fray Luis Cancer, 1549” (Master’s
280 “La yndia en ver tanta paz estava muy alegre y dixome ‘Padre yo no te dixe que como yo los hablese no
te matarian. Estos son de mi tierra y este es de mi lengua.’” “Jornada,” 1549, AGI, Patronato 19, R.4, f. 2v.
During these missing days in Cáncer’s account, she settled into life back at home. She walked inland, across the peninsula and to the Bay, to the village where she was raised. In the heat of June, she shed some of her clothes. Cáncer, the next time they met, remarked that she was naked, but naked to a contemporary Spaniard meant anything shy of the normal standard of Spanish dress. She may have just taken her top off. Without these clothes, the heat of the dry season was less stifling, and she looked more like a Tocobaga. She spoke her language at length, perhaps for the first time since her male companions had died. Perhaps she saw her parents, or cousins, or childhood friends.

What she did during the eight days while she waited for Cáncer is unclear, as is what happened to Tolosa and Fuentes. The Tocobaga captured a sailor soon after she went inland, but we hear nothing more of him. Later, Madalena said that the Tocobaga and their neighbors had prepared for war, fearing another entrada. An odd bit of text, embedded in a later history of the Dominican order, narrates this time from the perspective of Juan Muñoz, the Spanish man captured by Tocobagas the same year Madalena was taken. Muñoz, or his ghostwriter, says that after seeing the ships, the Tocobaga sent up smoke signals, meaning to oppose the Spaniards who had so harmed them in the past. Because of this, when the friars came, they were killed, and their heads hung from trees by cloths. Our narrator makes no mention of Madalena.

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281 For example, Fernández de Oviedo says of an indigenous group that “Las mugeres andan desnudas, e desde la cinta abaxo traen unas mantas de algodón fasta la mitad de la pantorrilla” (The women walk about nude, and from their waists down they wear some cotton blankets to mid-calf.) See Fernández de Oviedo, vol. 1, 68.
282 Remesal, 526.
life back at home. She walked inland, across the peninsula and to the Bay, to the village where she was raised. In the heat of June, she shed some of her clothes. Cáncer, the next time they met, remarked that she was naked, but naked to a contemporary Spaniard meant anything shy of the normal standard of Spanish dress. She may have just taken her top off. Without these clothes, the heat of the dry season was less stifling, and she looked more like a Tocobaga. She spoke her language at length, perhaps for the first time since her male companions had died. Perhaps she saw her parents, or cousins, or childhood friends.

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Madalena told her own version of events to Cáncer, after a meeting that Cáncer describes in detail. After seeing Cáncer arrive, she took a cross from him and went from person to person in an assembled group of Tocobaga, offering it to them for them to kiss. Concluding her ritual, she stood with the cross in front of the assembled crowd, an act
that caused Cáncer to beam with pride. She then returned to speak with him. She told him that his friends were alive in the house of the cacique, and that she would not lie about that. The Tocobaga, and their neighbors, readied for another war with the bearded strangers, but Madalena said that she had told her people that only a few friars came to preach, and that she had gathered this crowd to hear the message. Cáncer then left after giving out more gifts. In both versions of the story, Madalena came home to a Tocobaga full of anxiety and hatred of the men who had taken her, and who returned with her. Either the friars were alive when Madalena last saw them, or she knew about their murder and kept it secret.

When Cáncer got back to the ship, Juan Muñoz was there, carrying a Spanish scalp. Muñoz said that two Spaniards were dead, and another still prisoner. Cáncer, days later, saw another group of Tocobaga. Using whatever crude señales he could muster, he asked for Madalena, and in equally crude señales, they told him she was in a house, far away. As Cáncer waded ashore, hoping to continue the mission alone, a Tocobaga man embraced him. Another bludgeoned Cáncer to death. Fray Gregorio de Beteta, Cáncer’s companion on the mission, finished the journal and added the entry describing his murder. Meanwhile, Madalena exited the documentary record, and entered into whatever life lay ahead for her in her home village.

283 “Jornada,” 1549, Patronato 19, R.4, f.4r. “Y dada besala muy de veras y vese a tierra con muy gran priesa y dala a besar a la yndia nuestra lengua que aun no la conocíamos porque estaba desnuda y luego va de yndio a yndio dandosela a besar y despues que se fueron va delante de todos y con ella el mas contento del mundo mucho note y me holgue d’esto: Para el efecto en que al presente estoy.”

284 “Jornada,” 1549, AGI, Patronato 19, R.4, f. 4r-4v.

285 In an odd bit of narrative symmetry, Beteta was meant to be one of the friars to escort Don Luis de Moscoso, the subject of Brickhouse’s book, back to Virginia. For the order, see “Carta acordada del Consejo de Indias a Ochoa de Luyando, su secretario, dándole orden de pago de 12 ducaudos para fray Gregorio Beteta, para ayuda de camino,” June 4, 1562, AGI, Indiferente 425, L.24, f.105v-106r.
5.2 Part II: Bilingual Individuals in the Circum-Caribbean

While Madalena’s story pulls us in many different directions (gender, power, religion) for now I will let it pull us in two in particular. One is in the direction of the man who experienced exile in her homeland, Juan Ortiz. This is the direction of the European *lengua*, the rare Spanish, Portuguese, or other European individuals who by accident or inclination became translators and intermediaries. Many, like Ortiz, were forced into the role by accident, while others, as we will see, simply absorbed the language through time in a colonial setting. However, just as Ortiz and Muñoz are marginal characters in this story, European translators were a distinct minority. That leaves the second and more important stream, of indigenous captives and laborers like Madalena. Their story is the richer and longer of the two. Instead of being a collection of one-off stories of accidental dislocation or purposeful adaptation, theirs is the story of the indigenous slave trade, and of the continuation of the retrieval system developed in Africa and the Canary Islands. Although slavery was primarily an economic institution, it created the cultural conditions for translators like Madalena to emerge.

There are two rival claimants to the title of the first European translator in the Americas.\(^{286}\) The first was the Hieronymite friar Ramon Pané, whose current reputation as such was cemented by his publication of his book *The Antiquities of the Indians*, the result of years of living among the Hispaniola Taíno for several years at the behest of

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\(^{286}\) In this section, I echo much of what Angel Rosenblat has to say in a brief aside on the subject of bilingualism in his book *El Español de América* (Caracas: Biblioteca Ayacucho, 2002), 82-3. While I found these sources on my own before encountering his work, Rosenblat’s brief but broad treatment of the subject is an invaluable index to the subject of bilingualism in early published conquest accounts.
Columbus. Among his Spanish contemporaries, however, this title belonged definitively to a somewhat enigmatic sailor-turned-priest named Cristóbal Rodríguez. Rodríguez’s reputation was such that there is no appearance of his name that is not followed by the sobriquet “la lengua.” Despite the central importance of Pané’s reportage for what is now the ethnography of the Caribbean, his contemporary Bartolomé de Las Casas had serious doubts about his linguistic prowess (and thus his ethnographic work). Las Casas explicitly compared him unfavorably to Rodríguez, saying that he only knew one small sub-dialect of Hispaniola called Lower Macoris, and spoke it quite poorly:

Of the universal language, he knew only a little, like the rest of us, although more than most, since no priest, brother, nor lay person knew any of them perfectly except possibly a priest from Palos or Moguer, name Cristóbal Rodríguez and I think even he didn’t know everything about the common language.

Las Casas, adding insult to injury, later noted that Pané was “a simple person who did not speak our Castilian tongue altogether well, since he was Catalan by birth.”

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288 Thus far, I have found eight mentions of Cristóbal Rodriguez “la lengua” (or slight variants thereof), each of which assigns him this nickname. Five are mentions in Spanish administrative documents, all from 1505. These sources are Archivo General de Simancas, CCA,CED,9,207,7 and AGI, Indiferente 418, L.1, f. 148v, f. 153v, f. 171v-172v, and f. 180v-181v. The use of this nickname in administrative documents written in Spain would seem to show that this reputation extended to the metropole. The other three come from the works of his contemporary and fellow Hispaniola settler Bartolomé de Las Casas, and are cited below.
289 This quote originally appeared in Las Casas’ Apologetica Historia ch. 120. The translation, along with the original Spanish from the passage, can be found in Julian Granberry and Gary S. Vescelius, Languages of the Pre-Columbia Antilles (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2004), 13. For the original, see Bartolomé de Las Casas, Apologética Historia de las Indias (Madrid: Bailly-Bailliere é hijos, 1909).
manuscript itself was written in Castilian, so Las Casas is essentially saying the Taíno was material poorly observed, and the book itself was poorly written.\textsuperscript{290}

Rodríguez must have arrived in Hispaniola in the earliest years of the colony, at least several years before 1499, when he is mentioned as one of the important dignitaries sent to negotiate with the anti-Columbus rebel Francisco Roldán.\textsuperscript{291} His origin story is much like that of Pané. According to Las Casas, in another aside about the long Roldán saga:

One Cristóbal Rodríguez had the nickname “the interpreter” because he was the first to know the language of the Indians of this island [of Hispaniola] (and was a sailor). He had spent some years laboring among the Indians without speaking to a single Christian in order to learn it.\textsuperscript{292}

Rodríguez clearly approached his work with a sense of intention that it quite remarkable. It seems likely that some form of piety pushed him forward, since in later documentation he appears as neither a sailor or diplomat, but as a priest. In 1505, Rodríguez was temporarily exiled from Hispaniola for the crime of performing a marriage between a Taíno bride and a Spanish groom, which ran contrary to the policies of the Hieronymite governor Nicolas de Ovando.\textsuperscript{293} In the documents submitted in his defense, Rodríguez says that he had asked the bride whether she wished to be married, and that she had said

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{290} Whitehead, 25. This quote comes from chapter 167 of Las Casas’ \textit{Apologetica Historia}.
\item \textsuperscript{291} Bartolomé de Las Casas, \textit{Historia de Las Indias}, vol. II, (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Economica, 1951), 97.
\item \textsuperscript{292} Ibid., 175. “Un Cristóbal Rodríguez, que tenia por sobrenombre la “lengua,” porque fue el primero que supo la lengua de los indios desta isla, y era marinero, el cual habia estado ciertos años de industria entre los indios, sin hablar, con cristiano alguno, por la aprender…” In the larger passage, Las Casas explains how four European men in a canoe went ashore in rough weather to meet with the Roldán faction. Las Casas offers this capsule biography in recounting the canoe’s crew.
\item \textsuperscript{293} Archivo General de Simancas, CCA,CED,9,207,7. A good treatment of Ovando’s tenure is in Woodruff Stone, 85-144.
\end{itemize}
yes. The council decided that Rodríguez’ skills were sufficient enough to confirm that the woman truly did wish to be married, and that by facilitating the marriage Rodríguez was doing the true work of the church. The importance of Rodríguez as a cultural resource led the king to issue a full pardon, and Ovando was ordered to cover Rodríguez’s transit costs and to return some confiscated gold. Looking at subsequent documentation, Rodríguez seems to have been relatively prosperous, with enough cash to pay for the transport of a horse and mule to Hispaniola, perhaps to further his work as an interpreter/priest. He also owned a home in Santo Domingo and a small amount of gold.

After the difficulties of this first generation of translators, a second generation of more confident ones arose. Juan González Ponce de León (mentioned in the previous chapter) felt no need to provide an explanation for his Taíno language skills, which seem to have come from cohabitation with the Taíno people of Hispaniola. In contrast to Las Casas’ caution about dialectical difference and the imperfection of European knowledge of the language, González and his fellow conquistadors of Puerto Rico displayed a swaggering sense of their own linguistic competence. In testimony gathered in Mexico City recounting his career, González and his fellow veterans claim that he would on

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294 It was illegal under canon law to deny two willing partners the sacrament of marriage. For more, see Patricia Seed, *To Love, Honor, and Obey in Colonial Mexico: Conflicts over Marriage Choice, 1574-1821* (Redwood City, CA: Standford University Press, 1988). Thanks also to Fritz Schwaller, who helped me with this issue in conversation.

295 The king’s pardon appears in Archivo General de Simancas, CCA, CED, 9, 207, 7. The subsequent financial disclosures and biographical details appear in AGI, Indiferente, 418, L.1, f. 148v, f. 153v, f. 171v-172v, and f. 180v-181v. There is one record that plausibly concerns Rodríguez, but does not include the identifying “la lengua.” On September 22, 1505 the *nao* Santa Catalina arrived in Seville from Hispaniola with a passenger named “XPoval (Cristóbal) Rodrígues), who carried 150 pesos in gold. See AGI, Contratacion 2439, f. 2r.
occasion pretend to be indigenous and join in private conversations with Puerto Rican Taíno undetected.296

As the years accrued, the storms and hurricanes of the Caribbean basin created a new training ground for future lenguas who were shipwrecked or captured. Gerónimo de Aguilar and Hernando de Escalante Fontaneda were shipwrecked among the Yucatec Maya and Calusa, respectively. Like Juan Ortiz and Juan Muñoz in Tocobaga, others were captured. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo relates the story of a morisco slave who survived a massacre of Spanish soldiers in northeastern Venezuela. The man became enmeshed in local society, fathering several children and eventually fostering an alliance between the Spaniards of Isla Margarita and the mainland Arawaks in the 1530s.297 The story is a small reminder as well that not all castaways were Castilian.298 While all these stories are somewhat fragmentary, one thing unites them. Whether in Rodríguez’s marriage ceremony, González’s espionage, or the nameless morisco’s family and diplomatic mission, each depended on the tacit acceptance and confidence of the indigenous people around them. In the case of Ortiz, this acceptance was quite literal, enacted in his ritual stay of execution in Uzita and eventual acceptance in Mocozo.

296 This general line of conversation appears first in question 10 of González’s probanza de mérito (proof of merit) petition, and in the responses to it. See AGI, Mexico 203, N.19, f. 4v-5r. Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo (a conquistador of roughly the same circle and generation as González) takes this claim further, saying that González infiltrated an areito (music and dance ritual) of the Taíno mid-performance, where he heard plans to attack a local Spanish commander. For analysis of his incident, see Paul A. Scolieri, Dancing the New World: Aztecs, Spaniards, and the Choreography of Conquest (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2013), 30-1.

297 Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y. Valdés, Historia general y natural de las Indias vol. 2 (Madrid: Imprenta de la Real Academia de la Historia, 1851), 266-8. An ethnographic account of 1545, supposedly partially based on information gathered from the morisco, is available in Whitehead, 121-5.

5.3 The Slave Trade and Indigenous Lenguas, 1492-1550

Even though the indigenous slave trade was officially short-lived (1492-1542), it is still possible to discern within it two periods, or perhaps more accurately, supply chains. These supply chains were in turn what provided the translators and intermediaries for future conquest. In the first, inaugurated by Columbus’ seizure of several Lucayan Taíno on his first voyage, involved a great mixing and redistribution of the culturally related peoples of the Caribbean. These included the inhabitants of the Lucayas (mentioned in chapter 3), the Taíno of Jamaica, Cuba, Hispaniola, and Puerto Rico, and the Arawak/Carib peoples of the Lesser Antilles and the northern rim of South America. The second phase might be said to be everyone else: the Yucatec Maya, Tocobaga, northern Mexican Chichimeca, and others, gathered from whatever frontier was available as Spaniards began to explore the mainland. Both streams overlapped in time, and in the communities they were taken to, but the dynamics they encountered were quite different.

In one culturally-related peoples were brought together in bondage, echoing the story of the Canary Islands. In the other, diverse indigenous people were forced to assimilate into already-extant communities, and to overcome the massive cultural gaps between, for

299 After a long serious of ineffective half-measures, indigenous slavery was theoretically abolished by the New Laws of 1542. For a good summary of what might be called the “First Abolition” of indigenous slavery, see Erin Woodruff Stone’s conclusion, 294-301. For a longer view of indigenous slavery in the Americas, see Andrés Reséndez, The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Slavery (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016).

300 “Carib” is a rather dubious cultural category. It was used to designate so-called cannibals in the Lesser Antilles and coastal South America. Spanish law allowed “cannibals” to be enslaved, so who constituted a Carib was often more of an economic consideration than a cultural one. The European creation of this divide is dealt with at length in the Whitehead volume cited above. In addition, in supposed Taíno/Carib frontiers like eastern Puerto Rico, there seem to have been extensive ties between the two groups. For a recent examination of the available evidence on a group of “Carib” on the island of Dominica, see Stephan Lenik, “Carib as Colonial Category: Comparing Ethnohistoric and Archaeological Evidence from Dominica, West Indies,” Ethnohistory 59:1 (Winter 2012), 79-108.
example, indigenous people from the modern territories of Panama and North Carolina. However, both were pivotal in making the transition from signaled encounters to translated conversations.

5.3.1 Reunion and Ruination in the Arawakan Caribbean

Like the history of so many commodities after it, Antillean gold promised massive European profits at the expense of exploited laborers. When local populations flagged from overwork or, or simply could not work fast enough, profit-hungry Spaniards like Juan Ponce de León, Hernando de Soto and others mentioned above gathered Lucayans and lesser Antilleans. While the size of these goldfields is unclear, we can get some sense of the size from a casual boast made by at least once conquistador. Juan González Ponce de León claims to have, following a casual conversation with Puerto Rican Taino, found a gold field that yielded two million pesos of gold. He listed it as one of his chief accomplishments in his probanza de mérito (proof of merit, hereafter, probanza) petition.301 The profits from these mining operations could essentially pay for an unlimited amount indigenous slaves and servants, who were often sold for prices in the single digits of pesos.302 This unending thirst for gold and domestic labor also meant that Caribbean people who had experienced life with the Spanish, and likely learned some Spanish themselves, were a constant accompaniment to European expansion in the Caribbean.

301 AGI, Mexico 203, N.19, f. 2r. Question 6 in particular deals with this issue.
302 For a discussion of indigenous slave prices, see Woodruff Stone, “Indian Harvest,” 104-106.
Forces of cultural diffusion begun long before Columbus’ first landing meant that most of the people close to the Greater Antilles were of a common cultural lineage, broadly called Arawakan by anthropologists. From the Lucayas of the Bahamas to the “giants” of Aruba and Curaçao, each had arrived in successive waves of settlers stemming from the lowlands of South America. Like in the Canary Islands, the act of slave raiding in the Caribbean tended to gather up culturally similar people divided by migration. However, since the Taíno were expert pilots of sea-going canoes (canoe is itself one of the many Taíno loanwords present in modern English), the peoples of the Caribbean had diverged far less, and intergroup boundaries were far easier to cross. During Columbus’ second voyage, he visited Guadeloupe in the central Lesser Antilles. There he found a large number of Puerto Rican Taíno living among the local Carib, despite the fact that the Carib were supposedly bloodthirsty cannibals and the avowed enemies of the Taíno. Early transplants between islands seem to have been both been accepted and to have done reasonably well in their new circumstances. Fleeing ill treatment and sexual assault, 10 of the women taken by Columbus from Guadeloupe to Hispaniola escaped. They were given a kind of asylum by Guacanagari, Columbus’ chief indigenous ally. In 1514, one of Columbus’ first Lucayan captives, Diego, was not only alive in Hispaniola, but had risen to the status of cacique. One Spanish author

303 For a solid synopsis of the differences between Taíno, Carib, and Arawak, and these waves of migration, see Ibid., 17-52.
304 See Ibid., 69-71.
305 Ibid., 71.
306 Ibid., 133.
who had lived on Hispaniola claims that Lucayans brought to the island integrated so effectively as to constitute one people.\textsuperscript{307}

The first Arawakan people to enter Puerto Rico en masse were fellow Taino from Hispaniola who came in the retinues of conquering Spaniards. The names of many of them are recorded in the series of remarkably detailed ships’ manifests from the early years of the island I discussed in the previous chapter. For example, a man named Juan Castellanos brought with him Juan, an “Indian slave from Hayti.”\textsuperscript{308} Garcia Alonso brought eight “Indian slaves from Hispaniola Island”: 5 men named Juan de Aramana (Samaná?), Gomez, Cristóbal, Andres, and Gaspar; and three women named Beatriz, Isabel, and Anita.\textsuperscript{309}

The most interesting record is that of the ship Santa Maria del Antigua, which landed in the western settlement of San German in 1513. Part of what made the passengers of that ship so unusual was that the first passenger listed in the manifest, Diego Columbus, son of Christopher and inheritor of the title of the Admiral of the Ocean Sea.\textsuperscript{310} The passengers seem to have been part of the admiral’s retinue, helping complete the conquest of Puerto Rico or accompanying him to see his new seigniorial domain. The ship carried a relatively lordly retinue of pages, military musicians, and other servants. There were also dozens of Hispaniola indigenous slaves, including the laundresses Leonor, Martinica, and Juana. Of the 81 passengers of the Santa Maria del Antigua, 28

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{307} Ibid., 98. The original quote is found in AGI, Patronato 174, R.19.
\item \textsuperscript{308} AGI, Contaduria 1071, f. 216. In a similar record from Spain, a Spanish man brought two young Taino named Sanchico and Veronica in 1505. See AGI, Contratacion 2439, f. 1v.
\item \textsuperscript{309} AGI, Contaduria 1071, f.228v.
\item \textsuperscript{310} AGI, Contaduria 1071, f.319r-320r.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
were indigenous. With the exception of the laundresses, and one Spanish woman, every passenger was male.\textsuperscript{311}

Whether or not the slaves of the Santa Maria del Antigua were permanent residents of Puerto Rico, the larger point is that Taíno with extensive experience (literally as extensive as was possible, given that they came from Hispaniola) were entering Puerto Rican Taíno communities in appreciable numbers. These veterans bore European names, various levels of fluency in Spanish, and in the case of the laundresses, Spanish skills. As Puerto Rican Taíno were forced into the Spanish orbit, these cultural cousins would likely be useful references and resources. Just as Juan González Ponce de León would provide an interface between Puerto Rican Taíno and Spaniards in political and economic affairs, Hispaniola Taíno could do the same in matters of culture and language. Thus, contact in Puerto Rico was also, at least to some degree, an inter-Taíno process, and forcibly-acculturated Taíno could translate for both sides.

More than mining or servile labor brought indigenous people into Spanish households. One, as hinted at in the discussions of Madalena’s capture, was the sexual and the gender dynamics of the frontier. As Nancy van Deusen argues, in the camps of the conquest, indigenous women became servants, sexual partners, and occasionally

\textsuperscript{311} Several of these slaves bore mocking or classical names like Aristotle or “Little Friar (Fraylezito).” Another is named Julio (Julius), which was an uncommon first name at the time. Slaves from Latin America almost always have a traditional Catholic name, often in the diminutive form, while these kinds of names are typically seen in Anglo-America. This would seem to be a small example of an exception to a pattern in Latin American slavery to give slaves some level of Catholic communal dignity stemming from baptism, which is when slaves would receive a Catholic name. See Frank Tannenbaum, \textit{Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas} (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992). For an example of the repetitive or classical naming practices used in Anglo plantations, see the family data for a Virginian and Jamaican plantation made available as part of Richard Dunn’s \textit{A Tale of Two Plantations} project at http://twoplantations.com. Thanks to Hayley Negrin for showing me this resource.
wives, building households and household dynamics that would move from island to island, and from conquest to conquest.\textsuperscript{312}

A second dynamic is religious and cultural paternalism. In chapter 2, I cited a 1520 legal case from Puerto Rico that described an approach to cultural change and conversion dramatically at odds with the idealized vision of a Mexican mission of later decades. Regarding a group of Taíno laborers meant to work on the new hospital of San Juan, the authors opined

Their majesties, to ease their consciences, ordered a meeting of their confessor, lawyers, theologians, canon lawyers, and doctors of jurisprudence, in which there were some clerics, and ordered that after they were well informed by those who had a great deal of knowledge and conversation with the Indians of these islands. [They were] to determine the way that should be taken in the discourse with and indoctrination of the Indians of these islands that they might be Christians. It was determined that without the communion of the Christians, they could neither convert nor after conversion be kept and indoctrinated.\textsuperscript{313}

While I initially invoked this quote to explain a different approach to conversion, it is equally applicable to questions of labor. If the souls of indigenous people were best served by cohabitation with Christians, servitude constituted the most effective “mission field” available. As self-serving as this logic was, Spaniards of the time seemed to have found it convincing. In 1528, the Puerto Rican colonist Antonio de La Gama asked for a special exemption from the encomienda (a system of resettlement and corvée labor) for his dependent, a local indigenous boy named Gasparico.\textsuperscript{314} Gama (according to himself) had raised Gasparico since childhood, treated him well, and instructed him in the

\textsuperscript{312} Van Deusen, “Intimacies,” 13-43.
\textsuperscript{313} Archivo General de Simancas, CRC,LEG,148,f. 4v. It is likely that this is a reference to the Laws of Burgos and the arguments made by friar Espinal mentioned below.
\textsuperscript{314} AGI, Indiferente 421, L.13, f. 138v-139r. This name is a variant of Gaspar. The endings –ico/a and –ito/a are used as diminutives, and are often applied to young or lower status individuals.
Catholic faith. The king believed him, exempted Gasparico from service to his cacique, and allowed him to remain in the home of La Gama.

As Puerto Rican Taino mixed with Spaniards and Hispaniola Taino, the slave trade brought hundreds, perhaps thousands of Lucayans and Caribs to the island. In the surviving shipping records for 1513 onwards, a full 20 pages concern the importation of slaves from the two island chains. That same year, Juan Ponce de León began a war with the Caribs that would continue for several years, raiding the Lesser Antilles and Pearl Islands of Venezuela. For the indigenous people of Puerto Rico, imported or not, it was a time of radical change and rapid assimilation, both to Spanish colonialism and to an unprecedented new pan-Arawakan community, with even more exotic newcomers entering in smaller numbers.

Two stories show just how mature this pan-Arawakan system of translation and encounter became, and how much the Arawakan populations of the circum-Caribbean had come to be entwined. The first is the story that never, technically speaking, happened. In 1512, a Franciscan friar named Alonso de Espinal went from Hispaniola to Seville to discuss the controversial preaching of Antonio de Montesinos, the radical Dominican friar who had given a fiery sermon on the poor treatment of indigenous people just before Christmas the previous year. While he was there to argue on behalf of the supposedly slighted colonists, Espinal secured official support for a radical expansion of the Franciscan order in the Caribbean and Central America. Part of this expansion

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315 AGI, Contaduria 1072, f.134r-156v.
316 For more context, see Woodruff Stone’s discussion of these raids in “Indian Harvest,” 103-4.
317 For an overview of Franciscan presence in early colonial Hispaniola, see Ibid., 109-25.
included the creation of schools for the sons of Taíno leaders. This process had been going on to some degree previous to this expansion, at least from circumstantial evidence.\textsuperscript{318} As part of this expansion, Franciscans wished to take certain “Nitainos” whom they had educated on Hispaniola to other mission fields. According to the provincial, these people could serve as interpreters, “because they can more quickly convert and instruct the others [Indians] of the islands and mainland.”\textsuperscript{319}

This brief sentence is interesting for several reasons. The first is the use of the Taíno word \textit{nitaino}, which literally means “my lord” or “his goodness.”\textsuperscript{320} It is also the root of the word Taíno, which was invented by anthropologists centuries later. The use of this word suggests that Franciscans had been teaching noble boys about Christianity for long enough to have developed a corps of auxiliary indigenous missionaries who would give an indigenous face to missions. It also suggests an awareness that the language of their former pupils would allow them to more easily converse with the people of the Lesser Antilles and Caribbean-facing mainland. Ironically, we know about this plan because the ruling officials of Panama were chided for blocking it some 19 years later, and their chastisement included the original edict.

The second story takes us to the so-called “islands of giants:” Aruba, Curaçao, Bonaire, and the corresponding patch of western Venezuelan coast. Harried by slave raids from the surrounding Spanish territories, the indigenous people of the coast and islands

\textsuperscript{318} AGI,Indiferente 418, L.1, f. 171v-172v concerns the young son of a cacique returning home from a time spent in Seville. From later, similar documentation, this almost certainly meant the boy was living in one of the city’s many monasteries and receiving a European education.

\textsuperscript{319} “puedan mas brevemente convertir y dotrinar los otros de las dichas yslas y tierra firme,” AGI, Panama 234, L.4, f. 110v-111r.

\textsuperscript{320} Whitehead offers the first gloss, while Granberry offers the second. See Whitehead, 19, 30, and Granberry, table 11.
agreed to send a leader on a diplomatic mission to the Spanish Caribbean hub of Hispaniola in 1526. Juan de Ampies, the Spaniard tasked with governing the corresponding part of the mainland, met the diplomatic party, as he was also on Hispaniola. He already had in his possession a group of slaves from the region who were bilingual, and in response he sent a ship with five Spaniards and his *lenguas* to pursue the issue. It is a small story, an aside in the questionnaire of a much longer *probanza*, but it offers a fascinating portrait of the interconnectedness of two far-flung parts of the Caribbean and the sophisticated connections that had developed between them.

On the indigenous side of the equation, this shows that the people of these islands understood the political geography of the Spanish Caribbean and knew that there would be members of their own people there to communicate with. It was also an impressive feat of navigation, given that the patch of the Caribbean between Curaçao and Hispaniola is effectively open ocean. On the Spanish side, it shows the developing maturity of a system of Arawakan translators, to the extent that diplomacy was not only possible, but that a corps of them could be sent to the region with little notice. As I will discuss later, it was within this relative time frame (two to three decades after 1492) that the retrieval system developed in Africa and the Canaries reached a certain level of maturity. In this system, Spaniards used the natural cultural disruptions of the indigenous slave trade to store indigenous people as laborers in coastal settlements, and then retrieve them as frontier translators as needed, effectively merging the hunt for labor and the hunt for informants.

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321 AGI, Santo Domingo 74, N.1, f. 1.
In addition to the indigenous people entering the Taíno world, many Taíno also went out into the American Mediterranean and beyond. Some went on their own business. Juan Garcés, a Puerto Rican Taíno from the Ribera de Toa just west of San Juan, left his wife and children to testify before the Council of the Indies in 1528.\footnote{AGI, Indiferente 421, L.12, f.299v. It’s unclear quite what this business was, but a letter on the following page declares Garcés completely free and exempt from all labor obligations.} Taíno mestizo conquistadors show up in the chronicles of the Florida expeditions discussed above, and in other conquests, and we will discuss a Cuban mestizo who became a priest and musician in Santiago after pursuing his education in Spain in chapter 6.

Many had no choice in making their journeys, however. We know from asides in Cortés’ letters that he had Taíno camp followers who died of the cold in the high mountain passes of Mexico. More generally, we can turn to the words of Manuel de Rojas, a resident of Cuba in the decades after the conquest of Mexico, who complained how the indigenous population of the island had been virtually denuded by their employers and owners bringing them along in the conquest wars of Mexico.\footnote{AGI, Santo Domingo 99, R.1, N.17, f.1r. Cuba was effectively the base of operations for the invasion of Mexico, both because of its proximity and because many of the most prominent conquistadors of Mexico had been conquistadors, settlers, or officials in Cuba.} Though Cortés could barely grant any attention to his Taíno auxiliaries, their presence in his expedition, and in the many waves of conquest of Mexico, is another reminder that acculturated indigenous people from the former frontiers of the Caribbean were some of the faces of conquest as well. Just as the Hispaniolan Taíno, Caribs, and Arawaks had entered Puerto Rican Taíno society, so would the mixed Arawakan populations of the
island enter the indigenous communities of Mexico, connecting them in ways that were either rare or impossible before the conquest.324

5.3.2 The Retrieval System and the Second Wave of Indigenous Slavery

There was no manual for creating or retrieving indigenous translators and informants like Madalena, but there was most certainly a methodology for it. Frustratingly, as with so much to do with the indigenous slave trade and the labor arrangements that underpinned the early Americas, Spaniards were relatively silent on the subject. However, a few documents provide us important glimpses into the thought processes, legal frameworks, and business practices that undergirded these networks.

The first step of creating a bi-cultural individual was, of course, moving them from one culture to another. In some cases, like that of Miguel or the Tocobaga men mentioned earlier, this was a semi-formal process, marked with depositions and careful inquiries to make the most of a cultural resource. Most of the time, however, it was completely informal. The basic framework was unchanged from the time of Piste. Slave raiders and explorers of the farthest frontiers (often one and the same) could gather slaves to pay for their voyage, while sending an initial batch of captives out into the world in preparation for further conquest. When Soto’s men captured the four captives before the

324 Mexico and the Caribbean, particularly Cuba, do not seem to have been entirely isolated prior to 1492. Erin Woodruff Stone notes the broad similarities between the ball games of both regions on page 48 of her dissertation. Bartolomé de Las Casas believed that the coast of Mexico and Cuba were linked by trade networks. He cites the presence of honey and wax in western Cuba despite the lack of apiculture. In one anecdote, he found a massive cake of beeswax near Havana that he believed must have come from Mexico (which did indeed have apiculture). See Las Casas, vol. II, 43-5. During the Grijalva expedition of 1518, Bernal Diaz del Castillo claims to have met a Jamaican Taíno woman living among the Maya of Cozumel as a result of her being blown off course in a storm. See Historia Verdadera de la Conquista de Nueva España (Madrid: La Imprenta de Don Benito Cano, 1795), 40-1. Whitehead also notes broad similarities in religious concepts and deities of the two regions in Of Cannibals, 41 and 103.
arrival of the full expedition, they could combine reconnaissance with the translator creation. When these same Europeans sold their wares or otherwise ensured that the indigenous people they had captured lived with Europeans, they created archipelagoes of potential translators spread across the Atlantic world, like the Floridians Cáncer had met in Guatemala. Finally came the second or third round of visits or *entradas*, what we might call echo *entradas*, in which people like Madalena were returned to the places they had been taken from in the first place.

This did not always involve coercion or long distances. In 1529, Diego de Corral wrote to the Council of the Indies to explain that the *naborías* (servile, lower class indigenous people often treated as slaves) of Castilla del Oro (Central America) had come to live among the local Spaniards in large numbers. These indigenous subjects, according to the settlers, had been entrusted to the settlers at the end of the war of conquest, while others had been tempted away by good treatment in Spanish settlements. Following these migrations,

> After becoming mestizo and meek, they tame and pacify the new arrivals. Principally, it is they who discover the secrets of the land and are those whom the Spanish can trust, because after they are brought into communication of their peers, being well treated, they do not want to return to their lands.325

The colonists were upset that this vital source of labor, diplomatic strength, and intelligence gathering was being undermined by the encomienda system, which required all local indigenous people to provide labor tribute in their original communities. Even

325 “que despues que estando mestiços y mansos aquellos amansan y pacifican a los otros que viene de nuevo y principalmente estos son los que descubrien los secretos de la tierra y de quien mejor se pueden confiar los españoles porque despues que estan hechos a la comunicacion de aquellos que los tienen siendo bien tratados no se quieren volver a sus tierras y caciques” AGI, Panama 234, f. 35r-f.36r.
though the self-interest in this document is rather obvious, the argument made by the colonists is remarkably self-aware about the effects of colonialism and indigenous mobility. Like the document from Puerto Rico above, the use of the word mestizo shows that the Spanish thought that cohabitation was almost a form of ethnic rebirth. In fostering social networks that connected the indigenous countryside and the mestizo/Spanish settlements, indigenous mobility also strengthened the defensive position of Spanish colonies.

Not all attempts at producing intermediaries were so peaceful, but they pursued the same goal of fostering a network of individuals who could provide intelligence and translation services. When the Venezuelan conquistador Diego de Ordas returned from the Paria peninsula to Spain, he left 10 indigenous naborías on the island of Cubagua “in order to make lenguas to treat in the [mainland] provinces and to know the secrets of them.” Ordas died before he could return to retrieve them, and another conquistador named Jerónimo de Ortal had need of them. Some had already died by 1532, and Ortal was apparently concerned he would lose this resource permanently. The king gave Ortal permission to take the remaining naborías, provided he reimbursed their master for expenses. Ordas was just as aware as the Castilla del Oro settlers of the cultural implications of moving indigenous people, while Ortal also knew that the disease environment of a Spanish port city would likely reduce the number of people available to him, just as it had killed the Floridian men who had lived with Madalena.

326 “Hizo relacion que el encomendero Diego de Ordas diffunto viniendo a estos nros reynos de Espana dexo en la ysla encomendadod nueve pieças de yndios entre pequenos e grandes e una yndia naborias los quales havia traydo de la Provincia de Paria e de las Otras provincias de la tierra dentro al efetto de llos hazer lenguas para tratar en las dhas provincias e saber los secretos dellas.” AGI, Indiferente 416, L.3, f.69.
The role the crown played in the Ordas/Ortal affair was more or less standard. The king, or his Council of the Indies, would grant what amounted to eminent domain over the relevant indigenous person or people to a conquistador in need. If that person was a slave, then the order would call for the new owner to pay the full purchase price. When Ordas was looking for translators for his exploration of the Orinoco river two years previous, the council arranged for him to buy (or to take with, if the Indian was free and willing) an indigenous man who had been taken by the explorer Sebastian Cabot a few months previous, and who was living with Cabot’s wife in Seville.\footnote{AGI, Indiferente 416, L.3,f.19.}

If the person in need of a translator could not find one, as was the situation with Luis Cáncer, the Council would act as a matchmaker. When Pascual de Andagoya needed translators for his mission to what is now Colombia in 1539, officials at the Casa de La Contratación connected him with several slaves from the region, paid the owners of the slaves, and saw to it that the slaves were legally freed.\footnote{AGI, Panama 244, L.1, f. 31v-33r.} In later decades, especially after the passage of the New Laws outlawing indigenous slavery, the crown gave more legal deference to the wishes of indigenous people, emphasizing freedom of choice and freedom to control one’s person, and the legal edicts concerning translators changed accordingly. When Cáncer was looking for possible translators among Floridian indigenous people taken to Guatemala, officials asked about survivors of the Soto expedition, ordered the relevant individuals to be sent to Mexico City, and gave them license to “pursue their justice against any person who holds title, or against our
When Pedro de Heredia, governor of Cartagena de Indias, forced Juan Capote, an Indian resident in Cartagena, to be his translator in 1550, the crown ordered him to be freed immediately, and ordered that he be reimbursed and asked if he would translate of his own free will.

What is most surprising about the retrieval system was the number of times it was called into service, just within the confines of the scant documentary record, and the way in which Spaniards were able to keep track of the streams of indigenous people moving throughout the circum-Caribbean at the height of the slave trade. To make this clear, let us consider the documents in which either Heredia, or another contemporary Spanish official, Alvaro de Torres, tried to procure a translator.

Table 5.1: The Retrieval System in the Southern Caribbean, 1522-1550

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1522</td>
<td>Alvaro de Torres sends money to Spain for the purchase of Beatriz, an Indian slave living in Seville, in a ship headed from Hispaniola to Spain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1532</td>
<td>To the officials of Santa Marta: Pedro de Heredia has a license to conduct trade along the Colombian coast, from Santa Marta to the Gulf of Urabá and nearby islands. Please provide slaves from this region to serve as interpreters.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1535</td>
<td>In a “Memorial,” Torres claims to have procured a translator living in Santa Marta for Heredia’s conquest of Cartagena province</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: AGI, Contratación 2439, f.3v, AGI, Santa Fe 987, L.1, f.8, AGI, Santa Fe 80, f. 41r-f. 43r

329 “los dichos indios podran seguir su justicia contra qualquier persona que tuviere titulo, o contra nuestro fiscal.” Remesal, 514-16.

330 AGI, Santa Fe 987, L.3, f. 37v-38v.
who was a niece of the principal leaders of the region and another Santa Marta slave to translate near the Magdalena river. He did by sneaking ashore without the consent of García de Lerma and paying the relevant expenses.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1536</td>
<td>Alvaro de Torres</td>
<td>Sought an interpreter for the “Rio Grande” (Magdalena River?) at his own cost in the province of Santa Marta and asks to be reimbursed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1542</td>
<td>To the officials of Tierra Firme (Panama)</td>
<td>Heredia is aware of the Indians brought to this land by Juan Gutiérrez from the province of Cartagena, and seeks Francisquita in particular, who is sorely needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1550</td>
<td>Pedro de Heredia</td>
<td>Has kidnapped Juan Capote, but must free him immediately and ask if he will serve in a voluntary capacity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While this list is not especially long, each case makes clear that both men had an intimate knowledge of the shipments of indigenous people moving around the southwest Caribbean, and that each had a system of contacts that enabled them to find leads in procuring translators. It also shows the extent to which the slave trade and the process of translator procurement were entwined. These conquistadors were able to maintain information networks to sustain this process for decades, and local slave raiders and slave owners must have maintained a general knowledge of who they captured and to where they were sent.

### 5.3.3 Global Indios

What life in the mixed-indigenous communities of the Atlantic world was like is seldom addressed directly, nor is it possible to know every place they existed. In some circumstances, like Madalena’s Havana, the nature of these communities can be imagined
from contextual documentation. The best description I have yet found comes from a report on the process of abolition created in 1547 in Hispaniola. Apparently frustrated by the disruption of abolition, the Protector of the Indians of Hispaniola describes how the slave populations of the island heard the announcement of abolition on their island and stepped out, literally or metaphorically, into moral dissolution, hunger, and aimlessness. The local Taino, he argues, numbered as few as 100, and were spread thin across two villages and the wild rangelands and maroon settlements of the island. Some had allied themselves with rebel Africans living in the wilderness, serving as spies. Far more wretched were the mixed indigenous populations formerly held as slaves, who pursued their bestial appetites, walking through the streets drunk and dying of contagious disease, completely leaderless due to their diverse origins. Released from Christian instruction, they lost their religion and gave themselves over to their “rites, spending every day in the festivals of dancing, singing, and festivities that they once had in their gentility.” As dark and patronizing as this narration is, suffused with the moral rhetoric of a hierarchical slave society, there are hints of a connection in this story. The Taino, as in the time of Enrique decades prior, apparently had some connection with the African population. In the absence of any dominant cultural group, the newly free indigenous population of the island was able to come together in group dances and singing, apparently performing cultural rites hybrid either in form or in membership.

331 “en sus rictos todos los dias de fiesta que son las danças cantores y fiestas que ellos solian tener en su gentilidad.” This account comes from a letter dated July 25, 1547, held as AGI,Santo_Domingo,95,f.110r-f.112v. I transcribed part of this document several years ago when it interested me mostly for its vivid language and descriptions, and had little to do with my then-current project. As a result, I did not record the author. This source is undigitized.
These kinds of communities were not just confined to the large islands of the Caribbean but were in fact reproduced across the Spanish Atlantic. Earlier in the abolition process, for example, we have a record of the king writing to the judges of Gran Canaria to free the indigenous slaves he had been informed lived on the island.\footnote{AGI, Indiferente, 423, L.20, f.816r.} The most vivid portrait we have, however, is of the small Andalusian market town of Carmona, whose “Indian” (both Asian and native American) population has been reconstructed by Nancy van Deusen using a series of freedom lawsuits begun in 1558. In that small city, just outside of Seville, the servant community encompassed Moors, moriscos, South Asians, Mexican Nahuas, Portuguese, Spaniards, and Africans, all so interweaved that witnesses could alternately claim that the same individual was Mexican, Morisca, or from Calicut.\footnote{Van Deusen, Global Indios, 34-63.}

The hyper-complex ethnic world of Carmona provides a final insight into the mixed-ethnicity communities of the Atlantic world. As the Portuguese became more established in Brazil and Asia, and the Spanish more established in the Americas, the concentric rings of captivity embodied in mixed ethnic communities expanded continuously outwards, bringing people from the farthest-flung regions of the European maritime worlds to market towns in Andalusia and ports in the Caribbean. People from Portuguese Asia began showing up in the Americas began showing up as slaves in the Americas in the 1530s.\footnote{For examples, see AGI, Indiferente 1962, L.5, f.63v-f.64v.} In one Kafkaesque variation on this story, a man born in Calicut and living in Seville was falsely sold as an African slave in Panama, where local
officials had reportedly been confused by his dark skin.335 A free sailor originally from India, who had been married in Lisbon, died in Santo Domingo with a small fortune in various foreign and local currencies.336

There is one story an “indio” who effectively circumnavigated the globe, and who would presage a time when the well-developed informant and translator system of the Americas would make the jump to the Pacific world. In 1548, a man named Inigo Ortiz de Retes asked the king for permission to bring a translator back to Mexico. However, this “indio” was a native of China, whom Ortiz had met in Malacca. The two met as a result of the Ruy Lopez de Villalobos expedition, which had explored the Philippines and other parts of Southeast Asia after leaving from the west coast of Mexico, paving the way for the conquest of the Philippines roughly 15 years later. We do not know if this translator ever had cause to use his native language again, but he was among the first chinos in Mexico. In decades to come, Mexico would see Asian slaves and Japanese samurai arrive via the Pacific, while Spaniards in the Philippines would seek information and advantage across maritime Asia through networks not unlike those of the naborías of Panama, learning the “secrets of the land” of China, Japan, and Siam from sailors and merchants living in Manila.

5.4 Conclusion

335 See AGI, Panama 235, L. 7, f.24v-25r.
336 AGI, Contratación 197, N.26. This document concerns various people who died intestate in the Americas. The name corresponding to his entry is Francisco González.
The road to enduring social contact and bilingualism in the Americas was paved, by and large, with unspeakable tragedy. Madalena was kidnapped, lived long enough to see her fellow slaves leave or die, and then was left utterly alone in the city of Seville. Ortiz was shipwrecked and abused. Men were branded. Women were raped. Children were taken from their parents. Trauma was not a bug, but a feature, forcing indigenous people to adapt rapidly to their new circumstances and to become accomplices in the conquest of the places they had come from.

As we saw in chapter 2, it had always been this way. For Anton to take up the Gospel, or at least the gospel according to Alonso de Espinosa, he had to be kidnapped. The Portuguese were generous with Piste, but Piste had helped the Portuguese capture islanders from La Palma. While the complex and interesting mixed-indigenous and mixed-ethnicity communities of the Atlantic world were places where the peoples of the world met, many of them endured exile, rape, and work conditions that would eventually kill them.

What did change in the years after Piste went to live with Prince Henry was the incredible complication of this system. For men like Alvaro de Torres and Pedro de Heredia to get the translators they needed, they depended upon information networks that spanned the entire Spanish world. When Cáncer looked for Madalena, he looked in Mexico, Guatemala, and Spain before finding her. That result only came because of the efforts of the information clearinghouse of the Casa de La Contratación. While the Portuguese knew exactly where the La Palma islanders were, indigenous slaves ended up living in every corner of the empire, often in the control of their third and fourth owners.
It required a robust system of slavery, and a robust society of slavers with good memories or good record keeping.
6 Sounds: Instruments, Soundscapes, and the Indigenous Encounter with European Musical Culture

Minstrels latent on the prairies!
Soon I hear you coming warbling,
Soon you rise and tramp amid us,
Pioneers! O pioneers!

Walt Whitman, “Pioneers! O Pioneers!”

Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo was both an experienced conquistador and committed skeptic of the abilities and intelligence of indigenous people. From his travel through the Americas, and his government position in the port of Santo Domingo, he assembled his own memories and the experiences of others into a vast, multi-volume history of the new world. Despite his biases, and his decades of experience, he devoted page after page to the musical performances he experienced. The most lovingly detailed account is his experience of sitting in the audience of a ritual music and dance performance (areito) put on by Anacaona, the most powerful cacica (female cacique) of the island of Hispaniola. She was accompanied by 30 maidens in an elaborate call and response, recounting stories of Taíno glories both ancient and recent accompanied by singing and choreography. Elsewhere, he recounts a version of the famous acrobatic volador dances he saw among Nahua speakers in Central America.337

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337 For Oviedo’s discussions of areitos, see Gonzalo Fernández de Oviedo y. Valdés, Historia general y natural de las Indias vol. 1 (Madrid: Imprenta de la Real Academia de la Historia, 1851), 125-43 and vol. 4. For a useful historiography of the idea of the areito in European imagination, see Scolieri, 24-43.
It has been quipped before that writing about music is like dancing about architecture. The two systems of meaning, of music and dance and the written word, do not and cannot express one another without some loss of meaning. Music and dance before recording technologies were inherently ephemeral, with even the most tradition-steeped performances varying ever so slightly in context and content over time. And yet, as the stories above indicate, music, and its embodied expression as dance, does carry a kind of inchoate and ineffable meaning, even when its words fail. It is precisely music’s subjectivity - the way a drum thrums through the air and the chest, the chills inspired by perfect choral harmony, the incipient thrill as bodies begin to yield and unite with the rhythm of music - that makes music such an effective, if unpredictable, mode of communication. Music also brings with it the physical goods associated with its performance, the drums, organs, and bells that complemented human voice. Those goods entered the kinds of trade networks described in chapter four, and enlivened soundscapes of the places they passed through.

This chapter deals with the diffusion of western musical instruments, sounds, and music in the Americas. In Part 1, I take up the discussion of trade begun in chapter 4, looking at how indigenous communities consumed and understood western musical instruments. Part 2 looks at the entry of European musical styles and education into indigenous communities through literate, educated maestros de capilla (choirmasters) and the friars that taught this first generation of performers. I argue that music, because it could be produced and consumed with high fidelity between groups of people, moved in ways that individual speakers could not. Along with those songs came musical instruments, and the sounds they brought along with them.
6.1 Music as a Contact Genre

Just as in Bethencourt’s expedition, later explorers would employ music as a means of contact. On Christopher Columbus’ third voyage, the explorer tried to entice inhabitants of one of the Lesser Antilles with dancing and music. The local Carib, however, took this display as an insult or provocation and attacked. Perhaps it had less to do with the act itself, and more to do with Spanish reputations in the Antilles.

While there are many other places to examine the impact of music at contact, perhaps the most vivid and well documented example of music as a contact genre comes from the Kekchi people of the Guatemalan highlands around what is now Verapaz. One day in 1536, four indigenous men came to a village in the Quiche region of Guatemala. These four merchants carried European knives, scissors, bells, and mirrors, new trade goods that, as we saw in chapter 4, would have been new and valuable commodities. But what they did after finishing the day’s sales would have been both familiar and strange to the assembled audience. They played rattles, bells, and teponaztli, instruments that would have been familiar to a Mesoamerican audience. The songs they sang, though in the local dialect, were sprinkled with strange words like Egipto and Ierusalem, and concerned the life and history of Dios, and his son, Jesuchristo.

The hymns of the Varias Coplas, versos y himnos en la lengua de Coban de Verapaz give us an early firsthand view into the process of adaptation and adoption taking place between European music and indigenous music. These hymns, 38 in all,

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explain the narrative of the Bible in a highland Guatemalan dialect called Kekchi, beginning with the creation of the world and ending with Christ’s resurrection. According to a chronicle written by seventeenth-century chronicler Antonio de Remesal, several friars in the Dominican mission wrote these hymns, whose structure follows a pedagogical program laid out by their leader, the reforming firebrand Bartolomé de Las Casas.339 In his work De Unico Vocationis Modo, Las Casas says “It is useless to preach to people of the kingdom of God, of Heaven, to preach repentance and eternal life, without giving people both map and directions to get there.”340

The Varias Coplas did just this, providing the basic narratives and theological ideas of Christianity to an unfamiliar audience. To ensure that this material was familiar to potential converts, trained singers came to sing through the song cycle before friars even arrived. While the Varias Coplas were written by Spanish priests, according to Spanish ideas about Catholicism, the author or authors of the text were writing the hymns for a popular and indigenous audience and intended for their message to be accompanied by indigenous instruments. But, while indigenous voices and instruments carried this information, the pre-written hymns also allowed the friars to faithfully disseminate theologically vetted materials. Here, I want to offer a close reading of one of the hymns to see what it would have sounded like, the way it would be performed, and the way it addressed itself to an indigenous audience.

339 These hymns are popularly attributed to Fray Luis Cáncer, the missionary who we discussed in chapters 4 and 5. Although Cáncer participated in this mission, there is no direct evidence that he wrote them. For speculation on the attribution of these hymns, see Ennio Maria Bossú Z., Un Manuscrito K’ekchi del Siglo XVI (Guatemala: Comision Interuniversitaria Guatemalteca de Conmemoracion de V Centenario del Descubrimiento de America, 1990), 199-201.
The hymn I will use for this recounts the story of the Epiphany and the coming of the three kings. Though not indicated by the line breaks in the document, the verses each have four lines, and vary between lines of 7 and 8 syllables. This is from the second verse, which introduces the story’s protagonists:

Hun y caba San Gaspar
Hun y caba Baltasar
Hun y caba Melchior
Relic nim ruçil y chol.341

Reading the translation done by Ennio Maria Bossu in parallel with the text, one can see how this text sacrifices Biblical precision for the sake of the audience. The author adds San before Gaspar for the sake of poetic meter, though Gaspar is neither in the biblical story nor a saint. When the three wise men arrive, they come bearing gold, myrrh, and in

341 Bossu, 113-5.
place of frankincense, *pom*, a kind of Maya incense. Overall, though Spanish terms are peppered throughout the document, the intended audience was clearly Maya.

This particular region of the Guatemalan highlands had been a frontier for some time, and the local people had repelled each Spanish advance. While this mission province was a troubled one, the songs seem to have worked in breaking down local resistance to missionary visits, although this was likely helped by the new trade goods offered to the Kekchi. Besides being sound evangelistic practice, this project began contact as an indigenous process, in which indigenous faces and bodies brought new religious beliefs and access to new technology. If the end result was the conversion of the Kekchi, the splash of baptism was preceded by the drumming of *teponaztli*.

6.2 Music at Contact

6.2.1 Jingle Bells, or the Sound of Colonialism

Though largely unremarked upon in contemporary sources, bells large and small were the sonic vanguard of contact. In the early moments of trade like those we examined in chapter 4, small jingling bells known to Spaniards as *cascabeles* were exchanged for local produce and precious metals. In regions where Spanish presence became more permanent, larger church bells were installed as soon as they could be. As I will discuss below, Columbus and his men traded *cascabeles* for gold soon after his first landfall in Hispaniola. On Columbus’ second voyage, Queen Isabel sent a large church bell to ring

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343 *Cascabel* is often translated as “hawk’s bell” in English, but a more vernacular translation would be jingle or sleigh bells.
in her namesake settlement on the island. This section considers the meaning of both kinds of bells, both to indigenous and European communities, the diffusion of both kinds of bells, and how these bells began to change the sonic landscape of the Americas.

6.2.2 Indigenous Bell Culture and the Success of the Cascabel as a Trade Item

Beginning with Columbus, European traders and observers noted the intense interest of indigenous Americans in *cascabeles* with a note of surprise, regarding them as trinkets. As was discussed in chapter 4, however, to take such an attitude towards indigenous traders is to willfully misunderstand the economic logic at play in indigenous trade. Working from the lessons of chapter 4, I argue that cascabeles were valuable precisely because they reproduced or improved upon extant indigenous goods important to ritual

Figure 6.2: Above: Cascabeles from Guerrero, Codex Mendoza. Below: Similar bells recovered in Mexico State, 1350-1521. Held in the Field Museum, Chicago.
music and dance. These new cascabeles also had the specific advantage of being much louder and plentiful than previous cascabel forms in the Americas.

Cascabeles, as well as other similarly sized bells and percussive resonators, were widespread across the circum-Caribbean and adjacent regions. On Hispaniola, Columbus described how “to make sound to accompany their voices or songs that they sing while dancing and the sounds they make, they have very delicate cascabeles, very cleverly made of wood with pebbles inside that make sound, although very quietly and dissonant.”

Given the broad cultural continuities across the Caribbean and the prevalence of trade, as well as the popularity of bell-shaped seashell beads, it is likely that similar cascabeles existed across the region. The Nahua peoples of central Mexico made slightly oblong bronze cascabeles (Figure 6.2). In addition to archaeological findings, we have documentary evidence that Quiauhteopan, in modern-day Guerrero, supplied 40 bronze or copper bells to the capital per year, according to the tribute rolls of the Codex Mendoza. Similar bells were used to adorn statues of deities and interred with the dead. In the Maya region of Yucatán, these metal bells were used as a form of currency.

Andrés Dorantes, one of Cabeza de Vaca’s party of four survivors of the Narvaéz expedition, was given a large cast copper cascabel in what is today Coahuila, just south

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344 “Son inclinatísimos y acostumbrados a mucho bailar, Y para hacer son que les ayude a las voces o cantos que bailando cantan y sones que hacen, tenían unos cascabeles muy sotiles, hechos de madera, muy artificiosamente, con unas pedrecitas dentro, los cuales sonaban, pero poco y roncamente.” Bartolomé de Las Casas, História de Las Indias, vol. 1, book I, Chapter 60 (Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1965), 280.
345 Codex Mendoza (iOS application), f.40r. 1542.
of the Rio Grande, and *cascabeles* are included in the Tarascan language bilingual dictionary *Vocabulario en La Lengua de Mechuacan*. Thus, *cascabeles* were likely present throughout the modern nation of Mexico, and perhaps into the southwestern United States. The Andes had copper bells of various configurations, and early Quechua dictionaries included terms for *cascabeles*. The Muisca of Colombia has shell *cascabel* anklets for dancing. The evidence for *cascabeles* in the area that is now the Southeast is the most ambiguous, but Cabeza de Vaca describes finding a gold rattle in an indigenous house near what is now Tampa, meaning that Southeastern indigenous people were not wholly unfamiliar with instruments very similar to a *cascabel*. Given the prominence of the Florida Gulf Coast in the shell trade with the north, and the prominence of shell objects in Mississippian art, it is very likely that shell-based shakers and noisemakers existed.

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347 Cabeza de Vaca describes Dorantes’ *cascabel* as “un caxcavel grande de cobre y en él figurado un rostro.” See Narrative of Cabeza de Vaca in Rolena Adorno and Partick Charles Pautz, eds., *Álvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca: His Account, His Life, and the Expedition of Pánfilo de Narváez*, vol.1 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999), 206-7. Gilberti lists separate entries for “cascabel grande” and “cascabel de arbol” in Maturino Gilberti, *Vocabulario en La Lengua de Mechuacan* (Mexico City: Juan Pablos, 1559), 37r.


349 Adorno and Pautz, 34-5.

350 On the regional shell trade, see Jeffrey M. Mitchem, “Redefining Safety Harbor: Late Prehistoric/Protohistoric Archaeology in West Peninsular Florida.” Doctoral Dissertation, University of Florida, 1989, 172-85. For a general survey of Mississippian art objects from across the Southeast, including incised shell objects, see Richard F. Townsend and Robert V. Sharp, eds., *Hero, Hawk, and Open Hand: American Indian Art of the Ancient Midwest and South* (New Haven: The Art Institute of Chicago/Yale University Press, 2004). Although many of these objects were found in far flung locations like Oklahoma and Illinois, Gulf shell is a prominent part of findings across the Mississippian culture area.
Columbus himself suggests that familiarity and ritual significance were the reasons why the *cascabel* trade was so lucrative. The enthusiasm of Taíno consumers for these new bells, he claims, comes from their interest in dance. He believed that the Taíno perceived European *cascabeles* as “so large, shimmering and sonorous” that they become fixated on them (Figure 6.3), in contrast to the muffled wooden *cascabeles* he had just described.\(^{351}\) This resonance of *cascabeles* within indigenous value systems seems to have been widespread, and to have encouraged Spaniards to bring the bells to nearly every frontier of contact.

Columbus was apparently deeply impressed with the profitability and usefulness of the *cascabel* trade, since accounts of his second voyage are practically filled with them. Immediately after landing, the Spanish-allied cacique Guacanagari approached Columbus to inform him about the fate of La Navidad and to give him a series of gifts. In a motion of reciprocity, Columbus gave him Spanish goods including *cascabeles*.\(^{352}\) After founding the city of La Isabella, Columbus left to explore the larger Caribbean. Before he left the settlement, he gave instructions that since the colony could not be self-sustaining in terms of food production, the settlers would trade *cascabeles* and other goods for food while reporting their trade to the accountants of the colony.\(^{353}\) *Cascabeles*

\(^{351}\) Las Casas, vol. 1, 280.
\(^{352}\) Las Casas, vol.1, 358.
\(^{353}\) AGI, Patronato 8, R.10, f. 75v-76r. “Porque ahora la gente no podrá llevar tanto mantenimiento de esto nuestro como es necesario para el tiempo que an de estar fuera hallaban los cuales llevan mercaderías de cuentas e cascabelas y otras cosas y lleban mandado como por virtud de la presente, les mando que por el pan e vituallas que se allaren, a comprar, las paguen con las dichas mercaderías, teniendo cuenta de ellas poniendo el día y el lugar donde las allaron, y que todo lo que diere de las dichas mercaderías sea en presencia de la persona que estobiere por el teniente de los contadores mayores.” Via Erin Woodruff Stone, “Indian Harvest: The Rise of the Indigenous Slave Trade and Diaspora from Española to the Circum-Caribbean, 1492-1542” (Doctoral Dissertation, Vanderbilt University, 2014), 76.
have in turn been found across the contact zone of early Hispaniola: four at the site of La
Isabella and many more in contemporary local Taino sites.354

In 1527, Cabeza de Vaca recalled giving a northwest Florida cacique cascabeles
as a sign of friendship, and trading more cascabeles for food.356 In Trinidad in 1530,
Governor Antonio Sedeño gave local Caribs cascabeles and other European
manufactured goods in order to try to cement their friendship and allow the Spaniards to

Figure 6.3: Clarksdale-type (16th C.) Cascabeles from St. Marks Cemetery Site, Florida.355

354 Kathleeen Deagan and José María Cruxent, Columbus’s Outpost among the Tainos: Spain and America
355 Via Jerald T. Milanich and Susan Milbrath, eds., First Encounters: Spanish Explorations in the
create an alliance with them, which the Caribs accepted.\textsuperscript{357} A few year later, in the Verapaz highlands of Guatemala, the Maya musician/merchants mentioned above both performed with and sold cascabeles to their audience.\textsuperscript{358}

Beyond European profits, these bells began the process of musical change across the frontiers of the American Mediterranean. Even before indigenous people met Europeans, some of them encountered the European world of manufactured goods for the first time via these bells, which are so common in Southeastern contact sites that they are considered a diagnostic proof of Spanish contact in the sixteenth century.\textsuperscript{359} And in a small but tangible way, these bells changed the way indigenous communities sounded. In the Caribbean, Taíno and Carib areitos rang out with the loud and clear sounds of metal bells for the first time. In Mesoamerica, local musical performances and dances were filled with more bells than ever before, which were suddenly available in volumes and prices that dwarfed the pre-contact market. In the Southeast, cascabeles were available in large numbers for the first time and rang out in places where little to no other metal could be found. These bells were valuable precisely because indigenous communities understood and valued them, but they were suddenly present in novel, louder forms and larger numbers.

\textsuperscript{357} For an account of the landing and initial interactions, see Pedro Simón, \textit{Primera Parte de Las Noticias Historiales de Las Conquistas de Tierra Firme en las Indias Occidentales} (Cuenca: Casa de Domingo de la Yglesia, 1627), 96.

\textsuperscript{358} Antonio de Remesal. \textit{Historia de la Provincia de San Vicente de Chyapa y Guatemala} (Madrid: Francisco de Angulo, 1619), 227.

6.2.3 For Whom the Bell Tolls: The Imposition of European Bell Culture in the Americas and the Changing Indigenous Soundscape

Figure 6.4: AGI, MP-Florida_Luisiana-3 depicting San Agustin de la Florida in 1593. Below: Detail depicting the settlement’s bell tower.
Even rendered in the charming earth tones of the map that portrays it (Figure 6.4), the San Agustín de la Florida of 1593 was not much of an urban center, despite being the capital of Spain’s nominal holdings in the Southeast. The town itself was just a few small thatch houses, a church, and municipal buildings. The earthwork fort, an ancestor of today’s Castillo de San Marcos, featured some tents or beehive huts for its soldiers, separated from the town by cornfields. The town’s naval defenses consisted of a dock with a small European ship and two indigenous dugout canoes. Politically, the settlement didn’t expand much beyond this narrow band of coastal land. The system of coastal stockades stretching from Tocobaga to the Chesapeake had collapsed by the 1570s, and the Franciscan missions that would shore up the Florida interior and Georgia coast had yet to reach their full extent. Nombre de Dios, the indigenous village most associated with the settlement can be seen to the right/North of the town, while another unnamed indigenous village lies across the San Sebastian river, above the town.

What this small, embattled frontier town did have, despite its isolation and small size, was bells. At least four of them rest outside the church in a kind of rustic plank belfry, while a smaller alarm bell stands outside of the awning of the guard house. Even here, at the end of the colonial world, Spaniards had carried the bells that punctuated Castilian urban life. In doing so, they changed the rhythms and sounds of the indigenous villages around them, where the sound would carry across the open water and flat land to nearby settlements.

If the previous paragraphs were a consideration of why indigenous people valued cascabeles to such an extent, the paragraphs to come pose the same question for Europeans and their settlements. After showing the ubiquity and importance of church
bells in European settlements, this section then examines how bells would impact communities like Nombre de Dios and other places within their sonic reach.

Historians and musicologists have (correctly, if briefly) conceived of bells and other commemorative and ceremonial music as a kind of sonic furniture in the urban spaces of Latin America, filling the open soundscape and giving it a sense of prescriptive meaning and shape. D.R.M. Irving, the historian and musicologist of colonial Manila, describes bells and similar mass auditory experiences as a unifying influence in the city, reassuring pious Catholics while reminding outsiders of Spanish dominance of that particular colonial space. Elsewhere in the empire, Spaniards clearly felt the same way about the commemorative function of bells, prescribing them (and any other available instruments and voices) as the necessary accompaniment of mass indigenous baptisms.

As in San Agustín or Manila, Spaniards in other communities themselves treated bells as a necessary and constitutive element of a Spanish community, so necessary as to not merit much comment. Accounts of the presence of bells emerge incidentally, or in rare occasions, because of European observers shock at their absence. The picture that emerges is that bells, urban spaces, and churches were equally important elements in

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361 See the discussion of a 1544 baptismal manual in Ryan Dominic Crewe, “Building a Visible Church: The Mexican Mission Enterprise in the Early Spanish Atlantic, 1521-1600” (PhD Dissertation: Yale University, 2009), 415. Architecturally, the major urban centers of Andalusia also inherited large minarets from former mosques, meaning that bell towers were often the most obvious expression of both cultural conquest and religious unity.
making a proper Spanish urban space, and that the absence of bells reduced the town and church irrevocably.

Church bells came to Spanish settlements in the Americas as early as Columbus’ second voyage, when Queen Isabel donated a bell for the settlement of La Isabela. When that settlement was abandoned, Spanish settlers moved the heavy bell to the new settlement of Concepción de La Vega.\textsuperscript{362} The queen’s impulse to accompany the founding of a new colonial outpost with the gift of a bell soon emerged as a more general policy across the empire. In 1512, the first Dominican monastery in Santo Domingo was given a bell along with the necessary accoutrements for services.\textsuperscript{363} A similar package was given to a new church in Cartagena, Colombia in 1538.\textsuperscript{364} In time, it became general policy across Colombia to give these starter packages and bells to any new church.\textsuperscript{365} By the 1580s, officials in the new Spanish colony of the Philippines ordered that to assist the conversion and indoctrination of the local \textit{indios}, any Augustinian, Franciscan, or Jesuit mission in the islands would be issued a one-time gift of a bell and the necessary accoutrement for mass directly from the local government.\textsuperscript{366}

In all of these documents and decrees, it is clear that bells were one of the constituent elements of a proper church. Conversely, the absence of bells was a sign of a deep and troubling backwardness. In 1555, the Dominican head of the mission of Santo

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{362} Deagan and Cruxent, 118-9.  
\textsuperscript{363} AGI, Indiferente 419,L.4,F.6r(2).  
\textsuperscript{364} AGI, Indiferente 1962, L.6, f.75v.  
\textsuperscript{365} The initial decree to this effect was issued in 1549 and can be found in AGI, Santa Fe 533, L.1, F.106v-107. A second similar decree was issued in 1587 in Santa Fe 60, N.35.  
\textsuperscript{366} AGI, Filipinas 339, L.1, F.156r-156v. “para que hagan monasterios y entiendan en la conversión y doctrina de los indios supp.do.nos que assi a los religiosos de la dha orden como a los de las otras ordenes de San Francisco y Sant Agustin y la compañia de Jesus que hubiesse en essas yslas mandasemos se les diese de nra hazienda su ornamento in caliz una patena y una campana por una vez para cada monasterio que de nuevo hubiesen fundado”}
Domingo de Sacapulas in Guatemala, Tomás de Cardenas complained that in the region
the local Quiché Maya:

> Can neither build good churches nor have ornaments for mass, nor even one little
> bell in order to come together to hear the word of God. Rather, they have a hollow
> piece of wood they play in their *mitotes* and dances that serves them as a bell.
> [This is] a very indecent and ugly thing, but now they can have their ornaments
> and that which is necessary to holy worship. They can more easily be
> indoctrinated not only in the things of the faith but also in humane politesse.³⁶⁷

Cardenas hits on something underlying Spanish attitudes towards bells and urbanity,
which is that the social unity imposed by bells and by other familiar Christian material
goods imposed a respectable Castilian urbanism and Christian unity on even the humblest
pueblo, while *teponaztli* and *huehuetl* remained enmeshed in older, more indigenous and
“pagan” soundscapes. The civic centrality of bells can be seen in the opening materials of
a letter to the king from the fledgling village of Santa Maria deal Puerto Príncipe in what
is today Camagüey, Cuba. Although the village site was only four years old in 1532, the
residents met on New Year’s Day, with “all residents of the village being joined together
in the *cabildo* to hear the council in the church of this village at the tolling of the bell,
following our customs of coming together.”³⁶⁸

While Spanish feelings about the importance of bells are evident through their
actions, we do not know how they affected indigenous audiences. Cardenas’ description

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³⁶⁷ ni podían bien hacer yglesias ni tener un ornamento para misa ni aun una campanilla para juntarse a oir
la palabra de dios, sino que un madero ueco con que tañen en sus mitotes y bayles, servía también de
campana, cosa cierto muy indecente y muy fea pero agora pueden tener y tiene yglesias podran tener sus
ornamentos y lo necesario al culto divino pueden mas facilmente ser doctrinados no solo en las cosas de nra
santa fe pero tambien las de de la humana polícia. AGI, Guatemala 168 (6-xii-1555), Letter of Fray
Thomas de Cardenas, Vicario de St.o Domingo de Çacapula, f.1v.
³⁶⁸ AGI, Santo Domingo 116, f.12r. “todos vezinos de la dicha villa estando ayuntados a cabildo a boz de
concejo en la yglesia desta dicha villa a campana tanida segund e como pa los casos semejantes lo abemos
e thenemos de huso e costumbre de nos ayudar por nos mesmos.”
of their importance in the community can serve as a potential guide. In places like Sacapulas, or Nombre de Dios, large bells insinuated themselves into the sonic landscape of indigenous communities where they had not been before, often at the direction of the new missionaries and settlers who had brought them. Though the inhabitants of Nombre de Dios lived at some remove from the Spanish settlement, the bells of the Spanish community would unify the two spaces through communication at the speed of sound. The alarm bell of the guard house would alert them to French and English attacks. The church bells would alert them to the festivals and masses of the growing European community. As the indigenous peoples of Sacapulas converted, and as their percussion instruments were replaced, Cardenas’ sonic prejudices would become manifest in the community. Bells would call Christians to Christian spaces. *Teponaztli* would call indigenous people to indigenous worship and dance.

Besides connecting and reconfiguring space, bells would, over a period of time, impose European understandings of time on their neighbors. In Nombre de Dios, as in other indigenous villages across the empire, the repeated tolling of the bells would gradually teach indigenous people about the seven-day ceremonial cycle of Europeans. In Mesoamerica, Nahuas and Mayas and others would absorb the seven-day week in parallel with their experience of the 20-day *cempoalli*. As missions grew, those bells would begin to dictate the rhythm of indigenous communities, their mandatory church attendance, and their participation in the seven-day week.

With the arrival of Europeans, and their bells, came other musical changes and exchanges. European instruments, musical education, and composition techniques entered indigenous communities with relative speed, often augmented by missionaries and by the education of indigenous youth in Catholic schools. Indigenous music continued as it had before, although its relationship with religious expression made it increasingly more fraught. Even as they feared the supposedly diabolical aspects of indigenous music, Europeans also accommodated themselves to more expansive notions of music and musical performance in their early missions and in their descriptions of indigenous music.

Early missionary dictionaries, while not necessarily perfect diagnostic tools for taking the musical temperature of post-conquest communities, contain an almost bewildering array of musical instruments, both of European and indigenous origin. While vihuelas (a kind of proto-guitar) and Atabales and dozens of other instruments abound in these pages and in anecdotes of the early Americas. Organs, like bells, entered the colonial world as part of a civic impulse on the part of Spaniards, and later indigenous people, to import aspects of materials culture that raised the prestige of individual

369 Art historian Byron Ellsworth makes a compelling argument that the bilingual dictionary of Antonio de Nebrija formed the starting place and guide for nearly all subsequent bi- and tri-lingual dictionaries developed in the Spanish Americas. Though this reduces the usefulness of these dictionaries as documentary accounts of material culture, it does not negate them entirely. For more, see The Translations of Nebrija: Language, Culture, and Circulation in the Early Modern World, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2015).
communities. In indigenous communities, indigenous or mestizo musicians and *maestros de Coro* often led the way.

This kind of civic investment in musical infrastructure is invisible, but there are a few documentary snapshots. Only five years after the conquest, local officials in Mexico City granted control of a house plot to a “Maese Pedro y Benito de Begel” for a dance school, in order that it might “ennoble” the fledgling Spanish city.\(^{370}\) For a view of what happened as a settlement further matured, we can look at descriptions of personnel at the cathedral of Santiago de Cuba, Cuba’s first major settlement and largest city in the early colonial period. In 1541, the cathedral had two priests, a sacristan, and two “mozos de coro.”\(^{371}\) By 1544, a little further into the construction of the cathedral, the cathedral had added an organ and a third priest who could play it.

Indigenous communities, having begun to convert to Christianity in large numbers, also began making similar investments. The mid-sixteenth-century accounts of the Mixtec community of Santa Catalina Texupa show that the community spent a relatively large sum of money, 32 pesos, on organ music books, as well as 120 pesos spent on trumpets, and 15 pesos on paper and multi-colored inks for hymnals. This sum cost more than a year’s worth of maize and wheat for the community and church.\(^{372}\)

I intentionally omitted the surprising and emblematic nature of this third priest of Santiago, “a mestizo, native [to this city], who studied in Seville and Alcalá de Henares,

\(^{370}\) Copia paleográfica de los antiguos libros de cabildo del exmo. ayuntamiento de esta capital [Newberry Library manuscript], f.313, October 30, 1526.
\(^{371}\) AGI, Santo Domingo 153, R.2, f. 1r.
who knows plain chant, plays the organ, teaches grammar, is of an exemplary life, and who [the bishop] always brings with him.”

His role as a prominent community leader, as an interface between literate print culture and his community as well as a gatekeeper of musical knowledge would be emblematic of other indigenous musical professionals. While his name is lost to history, this priest would have been a member of the first generation of Cuban Taíno mestizos, since this was only thirty years after the conquest of this region. He, like Madalena and others in a future chapter, was sent to live in metropolitan Spain for several years. Unlike those others, he apparently was the beneficiary of a formal university education.

6.4 Mission Creep: Missions, Churches, and the Propagation of European Music in Indigenous Communities

Although his name is now lost, the Cuban mestizo priest I refer to above was emblematic of a series of charges that reverberated through indigenous communities across the Americas. So too are the convert-merchant-musicians of Verapaz. Both are emblematic of the kind of diffusion process that marked the second phase of indigenous interaction with European music (figure 7.5). As part of this education, they also encountered European technologies of communication, including musical notation and alphabetic literacy. In this second generation, indigenous people moved on from adopting the technology of European music to accepting European literacy, European musical notation, and the forms of European print.

The written records and musical output of this first generation of musical exchange are largely lost to us, either not preserved or not written down at all. Beyond the dictionaries and descriptions of physical goods we have, there are other hints of these events. In the idealized central Mexican mission pictured above, we see an indigenous choir accompanying a funeral procession marching through the mission courtyard. Given the arrangement of this mission scene as a series of tableaux, these singers are shown to be contemporaries of the first generation of Franciscan friars in Mesoamerica such as Pedro de Gante. This image implies that indigenous musicians could perform Latin music suitable for church funerals by the early decades of the Nahua missions. Doctrinal guides, usually published several decades into the mission cycle of a given language group elsewhere in Latin America, also hint at the intentional spread of European music.

Figure 6.5: Detail from an idealized Mesoamerican mission in Diego Valadés' Rhetorica Christiana. Note the group of "cantores" accompanying a funeral procession.

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as a missionary tool. The *Doctrina en Lengua Misteca* of 1571, intended for the Dominican missions in the Mixtec portion of Oaxaca, include the following short song (Figure 7.6):

![Image of a page from the *Doctrina en Lengua Misteca* showing musical notation]

Figure 6.6: Hymn in the *Doctrina en Lengua Misteca* of 1571.

Neither the subject nor the context of the song is immediately obvious. It is the only song in the book, and fully in Mixtec. However, when the song is sung, it becomes clear that it is a Mixtec-language song written in European plainchant, likely composed by a Dominican friar for propagation among Mixtec parishioners. Its inclusion

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375 Benito Fernández, *Doctrina en Lengua Misteca* (Mexico City: Casa de Pedro Ocharte, 1567).
as the only song means it likely contains a thought or concept deemed necessary to
spiritual life. Another Doctrina produced the same year records an earlier attempt at just
this. As discussed before, Augustinians in the Huasteca were few in number and eager to
disseminate Christian ideas in durable and stable forms in Huastec communities. Before
the elaborate hand mnemonics discussed in a previous chapter were devised, local
missionaries had relied on the stable, reproducible form of song to teach the local
Huastec Latin prayers. By 1571, the Per Signum Crucis, Lord’s Prayer, Hail Mary,
Credo, and Salve Regina were known throughout the Huasteca and sung in the morning
and at dusk. Local catechumens or missionaries had disseminated this music, and local
Huastecs had made it an important community ritual even in the absence of formal
instruction.376

The step beyond this informal literacy in European music, to a state more like the
anonymous mestizo priest of Santiago de Cuba above, is largely obscured to us. As in his
story, some indigenous musical professionals were trained in Europe, either forced to
travel like Madalena or as elites educated abroad, whether they were the mestizo sons of
conquistadors or the sons of indigenous caciques. As in the image above, many were
likely educated in missions by priests literate in musical theory. In the Nahua heartland,
schools like Santa Cruz de Tlatelolco almost certainly performed this task as part of their
classical/Liberal Arts instruction of indigenous elites.

But to see this process in action, we must turn to a peculiar and unique source of
evidence: the corpus of Guatemalan Maya hymnals distributed in repositories throughout

376 Fray Juan de La Cruz, Doctrina Christina en la Lengua Guasteca (Mexico City: Casa de Pedro Ocharte, 1571), f.9r.
the United States. While many were made just after the chronological scope if this
dissertation, these documents are powerful testimonies to the role of musical
professionals in community life, and to the way they opened the communicative frontiers
of Maya village life.

The hymnals themselves start in 1582 and continue through the early seventeenth
century. They seem to come in two groups, one centered in the hills north of
Huehuetenango and south of the present Mexican border, and a second around the city of
Coban and provinces of Verapaz. The first group seems to have all been in the possession
of one indigenous scribe, Tomás Pascual, by the 1630s, since his name appears in
marginalia in both collections, one presently at the Lilly Library at Indiana University
and one in the Special Collections Library at Princeton University. The second group is
more varied, encompassing later transcriptions of the *Varias Coplas* from Coban (held at
the Newberry Library) and a Pokomchi Maya musical textbook from early 17th century
Verapaz or nearby. Another hymnal exists in the collections of the University of
Pennsylvania, but I have not yet been able to consult it.

Beyond questions of musicology, however, these assembled hymnals are
fascinating glimpses into the role literate *maestros de capilla* played in joining the
multiple languages, artistic traditions, and veins of material culture that converged in
their parishes. Marginalia makes it clear that they were often in charge of large portions
of the mass. They were also arbiters of language. Francisco de Leon and Tomás Pascual,
the authors of the first group of hymnals, surprisingly favored almost every other
available language over the native Maya dialects. Latin masses dominate the manuscripts,
as it obviously would, but Spanish is the dominant second language for song choice.
Nahuatl, the omnipresent lingua franca of Mesoamerican conquest, is third for song choice and dominates the written marginalia of Tomás Pascual, including a series of prayers inscribed in the margins of several songs.

Maya comes in last, appearing only in a few songs. Perhaps due to the relative proximity to modern-day Mexico, as well as the favoritism shown towards Nahuatl in church affairs, Nahuatl was the natural choice. Regardless, these church hymnals show that these choirmasters were at least bilingual in Nahuatl and Maya and worked extensively with Latin and Spanish. Use of special letters shows that they possessed written literacy designed for Maya dialects.

In addition to working between languages, *maestros de capilla* bridged earlier Mesoamerican scribal traditions and modern alphabetic and printed materials. Francisco de León, the author of the first section of the Lilly collection, demonstrates a connection to the earlier form of the painter-scribe. The most obvious connection is his Maya-style profile doodle in a blank page (Figure 6.7).

![Figure 6.7: Maya-style profile doodle from the Guatemala Music Manuscripts, Lily Library.](image-url)
In addition, however, he includes these looping initial capitals at the opening of his musical phrases, likely inspired by the opening letters of European sheet music, but clearly informed by Mesoamerican song volutes, the glyphs drawn in front of figures that indicate they are singing (Figure 6.8).\(^\text{377}\)

[Image: Figure 6.8: Left: Sample capital from “Madrigal part-books from 16th-century Italy,” Newberry Library. Middle and Right: Volute-style capitals from the Guatemala Music Manuscripts, Lily Library]

Eventually, Pascual (and possibly Leon), as well as the scribes of the Pokonchi, started reproducing musical print culture in handwritten texts for local consumption, recreating the crosshatching, print capitals, and frontispieces of printed books in their work (Figure 7.7).\(^\text{378}\) They also were arbiters of alphabetic literacy, recording community business and teaching the basics of reading and writing to people within their communities. guarded and taught alphabetic literacy. Pascual was both a maestro and a scribe, recording community business across decades in blank pages and margins. Beyond that, they seem to have taught writing and music in some capacity, leaving


behind pages of practice letters and musical notation. This practice also appears in the

*Varias Coplas* manuscript.

Figure 6.9: Left: Imitation print capital from the Guatemala Music Manuscript. Right: Imitation print frontispiece in Pokonchi text.
6.5 Conclusion

Music is a social and collective phenomenon, musical change even more so. Music needs bodies to enact it, bodies to respond to it with dance. While Europeans sent cascabeles to the four corners of the American Mediterranean, those bells only rung out because indigenous people accepted them. The Varias Coplas were only performed because indigenous performers learned them, and indigenous audiences listened. While church bells imposed European time on indigenous people, those same indigenous people had to accept the presence of Europeans. When indigenous communities bought new musical instruments, it was because they wanted to participate in new forms of European music.

While many of the stories told in this chapter are as early in the contact process as can be, I would still argue that the acceptance of European musical styles and objects represents the phase of diffusion. Unlike most trade, accepting new music is accepting a marked aesthetic change from before, and by and large represents a collective decision to change something about a culture. That does not mean that indigenous people were becoming Spanish, or rejecting European music, but it does mean that they had internalized change in a way far beyond just signaling with people, or speaking via a translator, or accepting a gift. To accept European letters, to imitate the forms of European sheet music, and to make sure that artistic production was supported and that knowledge was preserved was a marked step from improvised forms of communication to a formal adoption of European practices.
7 Conclusion

And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?

Acts 2:8

The closing of the linguistic frontiers of the cores of colonial Latin America was not the end of the story of contact and communication in the American Mediterranean. Each wave of conquest produced echoes that continued outward into the American interior. Even in the supposed heartland of Spanish power, in Mexico, forms of communication besides translation or verbal conversation persisted. Before turning to the analytical conclusions of this dissertation, I wish to tell two final stories. The first is the story of an indigenous polity at the farthest reaches of the American Mediterranean in central Appalachia, and how the story of Tocobaga an Quivira, of Madalena and Miguel, was recreated in a new place. In the second I look at one of the unique ways hand signals remained a key method of communication in the Huasteca, a region on Mexico’s gulf coast north of Veracruz.

7.1 Manaytique and the story of Luisa Meléndez, Appalachian Exile

Manaytique stood as the jewel of central Appalachia, the envy of its neighbors, a stable site of indigenous power in the mountains far beyond the reach of Soto or any of the explorers of the southeast. They were part of a larger group called the Chisca, which controlled the road connecting the mound-building lands of Ohio with the Southeast.
Their luck did not end there. They controlled the only salt spring in the region, refining the salty water that rose in pools within eyesight of their main settlement in what is now Saltville, Virginia. No one in the region could season their food without paying the Manaytique for the privilege.

A girl was born in Manaytique in the early 1550s, and it is from her words and from modern archaeology that we know about this place that had disappeared before Anglo settlers came. She tells us of the other ways Manaytique was uniquely blessed. When the girl was a child, her people would go down to the Holston river, which teemed with large freshwater mussels, and gather pearls to adorn their metallic nose pendants. Attracted by the abundant salt, animals that had to be hunted in other locations presented themselves on the outskirts of Manaytique, and as a result they ate a “great quantity of venison and bison (lit. cows) and bear and wattle hens (turkeys) and many other poultry.” In their fields and forests they gathered and grew corn, chestnuts, walnuts, and beans.\(^{379}\)

\(^{379}\) AGI, Santo Domingo 224, R.5, N.36, f. 25v-26r.
Their houses were covered in fragrant cedar and rot-resistant chestnut. They also had tobacco, judging by the pipes that have been found in the area. Her husband would later say that she was a cacica in her homeland, but even if she wasn’t, she grew up with everything she needed.

![Figure 7.2](image.png)

Figure 7.2: Recreation of the Brown Johnston site at Wolf Creek Indian Village and Museum in Bastian, VA. This site is a recreation of a village that existed at the same time as Manaytique, approximately 50 miles to the East.

The wealth of Manaytique can still be seen today in the Museum of the Middle Appalachians, a former movie theatre in facing the main square, where the shell jewelry that was heaped upon the necks of the wealthy Manaytiqueans has been gathered and displayed. Most of these shells came from the ocean and were the kinds of shells traded by the Tocobaga: Olivella, marginella, conchs to be turned into pendants and columnar beads. Elk teeth, likely from the mountains, has been found in Safety Harbor sites as pendants.
So while Manaytique was as far from the sea as anywhere in the Southeast, trade connected it to the same Gulf and Atlantic coasts that Spaniards were raiding for slaves and attempting to conquer. However garbled those rumors were by the time they had made their journey, Manaytique likely knew there were new people who had appeared suddenly among their distant trading partners. Perhaps the metal that adorned their noses had even come from Spanish ships. A few years after, Soto would wander through the lands to the south, exploring what is now the Carolinas and Georgia. While Manaytique remained safe in the high mountains behind its palisade, whatever rumors of European
presence there had been would have been vividly confirmed by relatively close neighbors and trading partners of theirs.

When the girl I mentioned above was still growing into womanhood in the late 1560s, a man named Moyano came to her village and burned it down. He took their nose pendants and pearls. And he took her, down to the temporary Spanish fort of San Juan de Joara, near what is now Asheville, North Carolina. Like Madalena, she likely understood little of what was happening, and was likely raped, which did nothing to quell her terror. Her captors likely intended for her to be both a servant and a potential translator. She could have been the Anton, the Madalena, the Miguel of Appalachia, but it was not to be.

The Spanish garrison of San Juan de Joara, under the command of Juan Pardo, retreated to the northern capital of Spanish Florida in Santa Elena, now Parris Island, South Carolina. Eventually, Santa Elena itself was abandoned, and she moved to Saint Augustine, Florida, living by very different salt marshes. She likely spoke a form of Shawnee, so the indigenous people she met in these villages would be almost as alien to her as her captors. The bells of Santa Elena, and then San Agustín, would introduce her to the cycle of Spanish weeks and Spanish days. Over the span of these months or years, she learned Spanish. In the ensuing years she found a Spanish husband, a man named Juan de Ribas who had been one of Pardo’s men, although he was scarcely older than her at the time. He believed he was 16 at the time. She also acquired a Spanish name, Luisa Meléndez. Meléndez, or as we know it now, Menéndez, was the name of the governor of Spanish Florida, her chief captor and likely godfather.

Thirty three years passed, and the King of Spain was again interested in North America. To the West, Juan de Oñate marched north to New Mexico and on to Quivira,
where they captured Miguel. The Spanish were likely disturbed by English ambitions in Virginia. So the retrieval system spun back to life one last time, gathering old soldiers of Juan Pardo and old captives of Juan Pardo. Luisa Meléndez, struggling to remember her homeland in her forties, was again an agent of the Spanish empire. Perhaps thinking of her husband’s career, perhaps eager to return to the sierras and ridges and pearl-laden rivers of her homeland, she recommended that the Spanish go and settle the “tierra adentro,” the inner lands of the continent and of her memory. It never came to pass.

Well beyond the shores of the Gulf and Atlantic, rumor and trade meant that news of Spaniards travelled far into the interior of faraway regions like Amazonia and the Appalachians. Long after indigenous slavery was made illegal, Spaniards dragooned indigenous people along the frontier into the slavery that defined the retrieval system, prepared for ever-further expansion into the interior. Despite the contractions and setbacks in the affairs of colonial Florida, local authorities used a local form of the retrieval system when they asked for her testimony as an informant. In this, she was not so different from Miguel, despite the decades that separated her from her homeland. If the processes of contact history had slowed down, they had not stopped. With the arrival of the English in North America five years later, these processes would begin an entirely new cycle, albeit with new Europeans at the fore.

7.2 The Last Signals in Mesoamerica

Bilingualism was not the end of visual/tactile communication in the New World. In church, especially, concessions were made to the senses. Diego Valadés’ *Rhetorica*
Christiana, a beautifully illustrated guide to preaching in indigenous parishes. In his opening material, Valadés illustrates both the modes of cognition and the sensory inputs that can be appealed to (Figure 7.4). Perhaps more important, however, is his lavish illustration combining historical events of the early Mexican church with a kind of idealized mission church. Figure 7.1 and the next image in the manuscript make clear that visual materials were an important part of teaching. Early Mexican church art also makes this apparent.

![Figure 7.4: Depiction of religious instruction in Diego Valadés’ “Rhetorica Christiana” of visual aids in the use.]

But away from the wealthy Nahua metropole of Tenochtitlan, members of the mendicant orders were few and had even scarcer resources. In the hinterlands of Mesoamerica, and beyond, missionary friars sought to engage sight and touch in more intimate circumstances in order to transmit the gospel more effectively.

In the Huasteca, north of Veracruz, with its minority-language population, lack of mineral wealth, and forbidding hills, local Augustinians toiled for decades looking for means of Christian instruction that would work without a great deal of local manpower or

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380 Valadés, 111.
resources. Part of this involved teaching the local indigenous people sung Latin versions of the major prayers in the morning and at dusk. But this was not sufficient, and as they did across Mesoamerica, the first and second generation of friars in the region sought to create a “Doctrina Christiana” in the local indigenous language, in this case “Guasteca,” or Huastec. By 1548, a rough (grammatically incorrect and unartful) version had been drafted and printed in some capacity by fray Juan de Guevara, but apparently in small numbers and with a relatively terse text. By 1571, a new volume, adding new prayers and a catechism, was printed after being edited by Fray Juan de La Cruz.

This new edition was a work of an entirely different quality from the first Guevara edition, at least as described, and included an (unmentioned, but) stunning addition to extend the reach of the books beyond the priest and catechumens: a series of mnemonic hands meant to aid in the memorization of Christian concepts such as the Seven Deadly Sins and Ten Commandments. These hands were an invention for the propagation of medieval scholarship, musicology, and sequential prayers developed during the European Middle Ages (Figure 7.5). Another variation, the Guidonian hand, used the anatomy of the hand as a mnemonic for chord progressions. One common use in schooling was as a method for memorizing the sequence of Latin declensions.

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381 Fray Juan de La Cruz, *Doctrina Christina en la Lengua Guasteca* (Mexico City: Casa de Pedro Ocharte, 1571), f.9r.
382 Ibid., f.6r-v.
The hands drawn in this volume were meant to accomplish a spiritually important and relatively novel task: to mark indigenous bodies as sites of resistance to spiritual harm and to enable them to carry the doctrine of the church in the world. As the author of the book notes in the commentary on a mnemonic for the Seven Deadly Sins:

Figure 7.6: Anonymous Dutch Woodcut. *The Hand as the Mirror of Salvation*, 1466. Held at the National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.
Figure 7.7: Mnemonic for the Seven Deadly Sins. “Don’t forget to fight against the 7 Mortal Sins, which are killer serpents that poison souls and carry them to Hell. The Angel of God, your guardian, will help you, and if you want the snakes to not vanquish you, read the account of your hand. Write it to yourself as you see in this hand.”

Similar faith was put in hand mnemonics for all the numbered basics of Catholicism: the 14 Articles of Faith, the Ten Commandments, the Five Commandments of the Church, Seven Sacraments, Seven Deadly Sins, Seven Venial Sins, 14 Works of Charity, Seven Virtues, and Seven Gifts of the Spirit. In each, knuckles or sections of the
finger were a form of counting device, akin to a rosary, or the modern-day hand-mnemonic for the number of days per month.

It is unclear how long these hand-mnemonics were in use, or whether the books described extant mnemonics or created new ones. The book of 1548 was generally described as poorly printed, while the book of 1571 is, in its way, a technical marvel. Each hand was created from a series of interlocking plates extending from what seems to have been a common palm, with front and back variations. In places, the book even demonstrates a performer and stage view, where Spanish is inscribed on the inward-facing (performer) hand, and Huastec on the stage/audience view (Figure 7.7).

![Figure 7.7: The Cardinal Virtues, showing the hand mnemonic from the perspective of the presenter and audience.](image)

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384 My insights on the printing of this volume, and on the quality of the work, come from conversations with Ken Ward, the Maury Bromsen Curator of Latin American Books at the John Carter Brown Library.
Perhaps Fray Juan de La Cruz had created and circulated these mnemonics within his parish, or among his fellow catechumens and Augustinians, but this book would be the first written form of the hand mnemonics. Regardless, in its deployment in Huastec communities, it was the word-made-indigenous-flesh, and a clever inversion of the hand signals of the contact period. Whereas the hand signals of contact were group declarations (by and large), these hands were meant to be spiritual instruction to an intended “tu,” a singular, subordinate indigenous individual wrestling with questions of conscience. At the same time, in an area largely lacking in linguistic experts, it allowed Spaniards and Huastecs with varying degrees of bilingualism and literacy to transmit messages in reproducible ways with very little ambiguity, save for that introduced in translation, just as music had in the Huasteca and in the Maya communities of the previous chapter. Even with bilingualism, the era of signals continued.

7.3 Conclusion

At the beginning of this dissertation, I proposed that writing the history of communication leads to accounts of contact that are more equitable to all participants. As we have seen, for every high-status individual like Piste or Alarcón, there are hundreds of nameless ones. In chapter five, we saw how slaves were in fact one of the prime movers in the communication history of the American Mediterranean. The same can be said for supposedly humble or uninteresting places. Although the Colorado River was scarcely even in the mental model of Mexico City’s European elite, it proved to be one of the most important contact sites in this dissertation. Beyond raising up the humble and the obscure,
it also puts people together that we have long thought of as separate: Tocobagas and moriscos; Corsicans and Caribs; Catalan statues and Guanche missionaries.

I would also argue that this approach shifts our focus from what we believe to be the “destination” (the destruction of the Indies, the conquest of the hapless natives) to the journey, from the conquest of a few strategically important colonial centers to contact in the larger Americas. If we can forget that the Taino of Cuba were supposedly all dead shortly after the conquest, we can see how they survived in the mountains. If we set aside the ruination of the indigenous peoples of Florida by Anglo slavers, we can consider how a set of bells introduced them to European notions of time. We can ignore that the Spanish never conquered Oklahoma and think about life on the farthest frontier of contact. Contact, and all the processes thereof, is a stranger, more open-ended, and slightly less tragic history than that of conquest. This is not to say that communication is a utopian project that truly united these people. However friendly Alarcón was, he was at the vanguard of an invasion force. The Curaçao people sent a diplomatic mission to Hispaniola to end Spanish attempts to enslave them. However, we can acknowledge the tragedy of our historical destination while observing the vital, interesting kinds of history that happened to the hundreds of thousands of indigenous people who lived in Babel, even if they are no longer here to tell us about it.

One of the surprises of the research for this dissertation was the extent to which the patterns we see in communication are stable from 1341 to 1602, and from Panama to Venezuela. Although in part this is due to the wide historical scope of this project, I would argue that the similarities would remain if we compared the Nahua and the Maya, or the Calusa and the Tocobaga. When language, or easy recourse to language, is
removed, so are many of the cultural differences between groups of people. A weapon is a weapon, a gift a gift, regardless of who one is. In societies where captivity and slavery were common, the temptation to simply steal language skills and labor was irresistible, leading to the creation of translators in a system that was ruthlessly efficient.

On an individual level, there is no real evidence that Spaniards were any better at this than indigenous people, or that writing played a strong role in the conquest. Indigenous people seem equally, if more able, and it is largely them who were doing the work. The one difference is that of iteration, and informal institutions in conquistador society that were improved upon over time. In places like Florida, or Kansas, the evidence shows that indigenous people had the same capacity for learning, but European mobility meant that Europeans had more opportunities to refine their technique. If there is one arena where superior European technology produced superior outcomes, it was in the retrieval system. Writing and long-distance sailing did allow Europeans to distribute, keep track of, and utilize slaves as informants, guides, and translators at a scale that was unavailable to indigenous societies. Even noting this, the cruelty and long-term destruction created by this system proved to be a short-term impediment to Spanish diplomacy, and a long-term strategic mistake, destroying the cultural knowledge, wealth, and labor of the Atlantic frontier for the sake of fleeting profits.
8 Epilogue: Oh Death, Where is Thy Sting

The story of the Canary Islanders, and of the Taíno, is supposed to be a long journey to annihilation. The slave-taking process that brought Canary Islanders to Europe in large numbers, that filled the incipient sugar plantations of Madeira and the Azores, took a terrible toll on the indigenous populations of the Canary Islands. Virgin soil epidemics acted in the same ways they did in the Americas, easing the work of conquest and reducing populations on a horrific scale.\(^{385}\) Despite that, we cannot succumb to what Matthew Restall has termed “the myth of native desolation.”\(^{386}\) The end of conquest in 1496 did not mean the end of Canary islanders, or the end of their culture, despite impressions to the contrary. As mentioned above, they sued to defend their vibrant institutions and homegrown devotions (in some cases, into the early seventeenth century), influenced early modern European music, and persisted in identifiable communities long after their historiographical disappearance. Even when those communities had lost their separate identity, the descendants of the islanders remained in the islands. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, most of the people on the island still descended from Canarian women.\(^{387}\) Even among the Taíno of the Greater Antilles, communities persisted and stayed together long after Las Casas and others declared them “destroyed.” Translators were still needed in the highlands of central Cuba well into the sixteenth

\(^{385}\) Crosby, 226-7.
\(^{387}\) Thornton, *Cultural History*, 188.
century. Indigenous communities remained distinct there until at least the late eighteenth century, when they too began to become part of the white or *mulato* population.388

Madalena’s people were not so lucky, although like the Canarians and Taíno, it is likely that they too have descendants. They were slowly destroyed by slave raiders seeking laborers for the growing plantations of South Carolina. A 1721 map describing native peoples and natural resources of the Southeast contains the entry “Tocobaga Indians, destroyed 1709.”389 We know that some Tocobaga joined the Apalache, and that remnants of the Apalache evacuated to Havana and fled to what is now Louisiana. It is of course a possibility that some remained in the interior and joined with what are now the Seminole. The Wichita, the descendants of Etzanoa and the other settled peoples of Miguel’s world, still live in the area. Miguel, unfortunately, is lost to history.

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**Scott Ryan Cave**

## Education

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