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# Introduction<sup>1</sup>

JUSTYNA OLKO AND JAN SZEMIŃSKI

Over the years, indigenous elites under Spanish rule have been both acknowledged and ignored by historians, anthropologists, and linguists. No one contests the fact that these people existed; however, their own voices are rarely heard and still have a rather limited impact on the modern readings of their history. Today, as a result of the slow but systematic development of research on indigenous sources, focusing first on the ways that those who were supposedly conquered in Mexico and Peru imagined the conquest itself and their own role in it, and subsequently on how they dealt with its consequences, it has become increasingly obvious that the Spanish Empire Over the Sea was not constructed only by the brave conquerors,

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1 The research on indigenous elites was supported by a grant from the National Science Center (decision DEC-2011/01/B/HS3/02185, 2011–2014). The study was further developed and significantly extended—in terms of the content, the research questions, and the scope of the sources included—in the years 2015–2017 with funding from the European Research Council under the European Union’s Seventh Framework Programme (FP7/2007–2013/ERC grant agreement n° 312795). As part of this project it embraced the phenomena of cross-cultural transfer between indigenous and European cultures, with special focus on language as well as culture contact and change, as reflected in Nahuatl and Quechua. Jan Szemiński’s participation was also supported by the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. John Sullivan’s participation was supported in part by the Universidad Autónoma de Zacatecas.

but also, to a very large extent, by local indigenous elites.<sup>2</sup> Simultaneously subjects and officials of the Crown, it was they who truly carried out the daily governance of the entire Amerindian population where it survived in New Spain and most parts of the Viceroyalty of Peru. Without the service and collaboration of these members of the dynasties of former kings, lords, and other indigenous leaders, Spanish administrators, and conquerors, who had neither the knowledge nor the ability to govern a local population—initially of tens of millions but crashing later to only several million—would not have succeeded. They were too few. However, it is clear from indigenous documents that native elites looked at this process, as well as their position, roles, goals, and advantages in it, in a much different way than was perceived by the Spaniards and, later, the historians who relied exclusively on Spanish sources.

These processes were obviously also directly influenced by the Crown's strategies and the attitudes of its representatives. The conquerors wanted native Americans alive and economically productive. In Haiti (Hispaniola, Española, Santo Domingo), the Spaniards had already discovered that they desperately needed the cooperation of the local leaders, called *caciques* in the Taino language. Without them they would not get food, much less gold, women, or other precious goods. This initial experience must have had lasting impact, because the word *cacique* became the general name for all indigenous leaders in the Spanish empire, from California and Florida to Chile and Buenos Aires, from Navajos and Seminoles in the north to Mapuches and Tehuelches in the south. Indigenous elites, however, were not composed of only *caciques* and their families. Administration in native states and chiefdoms was much more complex because local rulers relied on various kinds of functionaries to administer their own possessions, organize and supervise the

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2 Pioneering research on indigenous Mesoamerican elites studied from the perspective of their own sources was carried out by Reyes García 1988a, 1988b; Lockhart 1991, 1992; Haskett 1986; Horn 1991; Restall 1995; Doesburg 2002; Terraciano 2002; Wood 2003; Pizzigoni 2007; Chuchiak 2010; Rojas 2012; Townsend 2016; Melton-Villanueva 2016, and others. More recently, there has been important research in colonial and modern Mesoamerican studies focusing on native intellectuals, studied through both indigenous and Spanish sources (e.g., Tavárez 2013; McDonough 2014; Villella 2016). In Andean studies the first texts on indigenous elites appeared in the nineteenth century, motivated by the Great Rebellion of 1780–1783 and other supposed precursors of the wars of independence (Lewin 1967; Rowe 1955). The *indigenista* movement in the twentieth century provoked new research (Rowe 2003), which slowly generated a new perspective on native elites (for example Estenssoro Fuchs 2003; Pärssinen Kiviharju 2004, 2010; Husson 2005; Curatola, Petrochi, and de la Puente Luna 2013; Gonzales 2014; Ramos and Yannakakis 2014; Adorno and Boserup 2015).

work of their subjects, and collect their taxes. Thus all local states in Mexico and Guatemala had their *calpixqueh* (administrators) and scribes, while all local officials in the Inca empire had their *khipu kamayuqs*, specialists in knot notations for keeping track of statistics, calendars, properties, and histories. These are not exhaustive: native elites needed many more types of specialists, including artisans, agronomists, and engineers. On the other hand, the kings of Castile and Leon, both of whose kingdoms rather than Spain as a whole shared rights to the American possessions, recognized Amerindian elites as nobility. This was extremely important to native noblemen because it meant that, solely because of their birth status, they were exempt from head tax and could not be obliged to participate in forced labor, as were all other indigenous subjects. For this reason, the numbers of local nobility quickly swelled. Everyone sought to be included, just as did those Spaniards in America who cited Asturias, inhabited exclusively by *hidalgos*, as their place of origin.

From the arrival of the Spaniards in 1492 until about 1700, new illnesses from the Old World, the destruction of economic infrastructure, wars, forced labor, and hunger drastically reduced the Amerindian population in all of the Spanish domains, with the most extreme estimates suggesting as much as a 90 percent reduction (Cook 1998; Crosby 1972: 44–56; 1994: 97–106; Nutini and Isaac 2009: 33).<sup>3</sup> It is estimated that the indigenous population in central Mexico (from the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in the south to Nueva Galicia in the north) was reduced from ca. 25 million in 1518 to ca. 1.9 million in 1585 and only 0.75 million in 1622 (Borah 1983: 26). This catastrophe forced the new rulers to take special administrative and organizational measures in order to protect the interests, both of the empire—taxes and forced labor—and the colonists, who wanted to build large *latifundia* and needed a ready work force. Thus in the mid-sixteenth century Spanish administrators were already beginning to resettle the indigenous population into bigger, centralized villages and towns, in order to facilitate political control, tax collection, forced labor administration, and Christianization. After all, even though the Spanish Empire needed local indigenous people, it wanted them as Catholic Christians and not as heathens. In the new settlements, which always had land assigned both to the town as a whole and to each family in particular, a new type of administration, modeled after Castilian municipal government, was to prevail. One of its objectives was to diminish the influence of local rulers;

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3 It is estimated that the demographic recovery of the indigenous population got underway in New Spain around 1650, but in the Andes the process began a bit later, near the beginning of the eighteenth century.

however, the process developed differently in each region. In the empire as a whole, local Amerindian elites managed to take over most or all municipal administrative functions, thus adding influence to the power they already had from precolonial times. But after all, it was power over a diminishing native population, and Amerindian administrators had no jurisdiction over non-indigenous people, except in cases when they possessed slaves, imported from Africa by the Spaniards.

Native ways of representing colonial reality through their own writings and documentary production have already made their way into the modern scholarly world through a number of anthologies, some of them editions of indigenous sources with English or Spanish translations, accompanied by both extensive and abbreviated studies and commentaries.<sup>4</sup> Building and expanding on this important tradition, the present book is a critical, commented anthology of indigenous-authored texts, including the Nahuatl, Quechua, and Spanish originals. As such, it is a first attempt to bring together native testimonies from two different areas of Spanish expansion in the Americas in order to compare these geographically and culturally distant realities of indigenous elites in the colonial period.<sup>5</sup> Our intention is not to comprehensively present and describe

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4 Editions of Nahuatl documents hold an especially prominent and in many ways pioneering place in this vein of scholarship. While the following list is certainly not exhaustive, publications of original Nahuatl documents along with modern translations and critical commentaries/studies go back to 1976 and have continued to appear until recently: Anderson, Berdan, and Lockhart 1976; Karttunen and Lockhart 1976; Cline and León-Portilla 1984; Karttunen and Lockhart 1987; Reyes García 1988b, 2001; Lockhart 1991; Lockhart 1992; Cline 1993; Zapata y Mendoza [Reyes García and Martínez Baracs] 1995; Dakin and Lutz 1996; Schwaller and Sell 1999; Burkhart 2001; Sullivan 2007; Pizzigoni 2007; Townsend 2010; Melton-Villanueva 2014, 2017, among others. A separate, large group of publications includes editions of the so-called primary sources in Nahuatl (e.g., Sahaguntine corpus, works by Chimalpahin, *Cantares mexicanos*). An anthology of documents in Spanish dealing with indigenous elites was published by Pérez-Rocha and Tena (2000); an extensively commented anthology published by Restall and Asselbers (2007) contains the translation into English of Spanish and native documents (without the originals) related to the different stages and experiences of the conquest; similarly, the anthology edited by Restall, Sousa, and Terraciano (2005) provides only English translations of documents originally in Nahuatl and Yucatec Maya, representing different genres of colonial writing. Some publications contain transcriptions and Spanish colonial *trasuntos* of original native documents with no modern translations (Luis Reyes García et al. 1996; Rojas Rabiela et al. 1999). Andean examples include Salomon and Urioste 1991; Pärssinen and Kiviharju 2004, 2010; Husson 2001; Gonzales 2014.

5 A certain precedent is no doubt established by the collective book edited by Kellogg and Restall (1998) that deals with native testaments of colonial Mesoamerica and the Andes. Sample wills accompany the chapters of the book; although a number of Nahuatl documents are included, the Andean sample contains testaments written in Spanish.

native elites in these two essential macroregions of the Spanish Empire Over the Sea. Our objectives are much more modest. First, we wish to demonstrate that they existed as independent actors in colonial society, as well as agents of social change and indigenous sustainability in colonial times. We know, of course, that indigenous elites survived the Wars of Independence; however, both the armed conflicts and independence itself changed their situation and eroded their existence as a separate social group. Second, we want to show the elites through documents they themselves produced or caused to be produced, giving as much priority as possible to indigenous ways of expression, perspectives, and concepts. Elites were particularly influential in the Nahua area of Mexico and in the former Inca empire. The Mexican elites, who had paper and hieroglyphic writing before the conquest, quickly produced documents written in Nahuatl with the Latin alphabet. The Andean elites' writing systems did not resemble anything the Spaniards brought with them. After the conquest they continued using their traditional knot-records; they used three-dimensional hieroglyphics in Quechua and Aymara for Catholic prayers; and later they produced texts using the Latin alphabet in Spanish and, exceptionally, in Quechua. Written Quechua was used more by Catholic missionaries than by indigenous people themselves.

Our choice of documents is not entirely and exhaustively representative for the topic. This would indeed require many volumes. Thus, although our intention is to showcase the important and varied colonial genres of indigenous writing, the documents we have selected reveal only some, but by no means all, of the realities, needs, strategies, behaviors, and attitudes associated with the lives of the elites. Likewise, we do not presume to have collected a corpus of documents that speaks for all the elites, because it is impossible to define them strictly and establish borders that set them apart from other social actors. It is evident in the sample presented here that many groups in indigenous society had access to writing (through notaries) and used it to defend and promote their needs and interests. As we show, indicators such as the material base, degree of wealth, and social position form a kind of continuum: defining boundaries between "elites" and "non-elites" is an inherently problematic endeavor. Perhaps elites can be best understood not only as nobility but also as active groups within local communities enjoying varying shades of status.

We do, however, wish to present and discuss the characteristics of specific genres of documents. Each document in this anthology is transcribed exactly as it appears in the manuscript or in the colonial printed document, rendering as faithfully as possible, all abbreviations, marginal notes, signs, numbers, measures, and so on. Each is translated to English from Nahuatl,

Spanish, or Quechua, and accompanied by a commentary and footnotes, and a collective glossary of recurrent expressions from Spanish, Nahuatl, and Quechua appears at the end of this volume. The original documents have been identified, transcribed, translated, and studied by the authors of each particular section and, with some exceptions, are published here for the first time.<sup>6</sup> Accompanying each document, a study comments on the content of the document, its historical and cultural context, as well as the reasons it was composed in the first place—highlighting the identities, roles, strategies, and actions linked to indigenous elites and other members of local communities. The characteristics of a specific genre, along with literary and orthographic conventions, are also discussed. We give special attention to the language of the documents: on the one hand, we focus on the survival of preconquest concepts, and on the other hand we examine the contact-induced changes in language that simultaneously accompany, result from, and contribute to more general and varied types of cross-cultural transfer and cultural change. The contributors to the volume comment extensively on the mutual influences between Spanish and Nahuatl, or Spanish and Quechua, showing that in many cases a scholar studying a text written by an indigenous person in Spanish may not be able to understand its form or content completely if he or she cannot interpret it from the perspective of the writer's first language.

So, for whom is this book? Students and researchers interested in indigenous colonial societies in the Spanish Empire will discover in its pages the persistent existence and the blurred boundaries of Amerindian elites, the sources that need to be mustered and the problems that should be addressed in order to study them, and the need to explore such elites in each region with the careful and multifaceted analyses of their own sources. To these objectives we add the overarching imperative to compare and contrast indigenous elites in the empire as a whole; this will allow us to demonstrate that the imperial sociopolitical group known as *caciques* was an artificial generalization created by Castilian administrators, bureaucrats, and modern historians and existed on paper only. We want to embrace different members of local elites, at different levels of the social hierarchy; we want to compare the *apus* (Andean lords) and their servants with the Mexican *tlahtoqueh* and *pipiltin* (rulers and nobles, respectively) and their modes of organization under the rule of the viceroys of New Spain and Peru. We will leave the *caciques* in peace on the Caribbean Islands.

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6 Information regarding the previous publication of a given document appears in a footnote in its respective study.