

Naturalizing Borderlands in Time and Space:
Imperial Frontiers and Historical Indigeneities in the Americas

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Borders, Borderlands and Border Thinking in Latin America

Introduction

It is a great honor and an even greater pleasure to join your conversation about borderlands in this exciting conference today. I thank all the organizers who have worked so hard to bring together this group of creative scholars for the sixteenth annual Latin American and Caribbean Studies SUNY Stonybrook Conference, and especially Matthew Ford and Zinnia Capo-Valdivia, who have made my participation possible and my visit with you so enjoyable.

Many innovative thinkers from different areas of study and world regions have devoted research to the multiple dimensions of borders and borderlands. Their published scholarship and teaching have made *borderlands* a dynamic and cutting-edge field, one that is necessarily interdisciplinary and that embraces diverse themes like economic circuits of production and exchange, ecological biomes, social and familial networks, international security, and social, linguistic, and cultural frontiers – as your CFP outlines so well. I am honored that you have invited me as one practitioner in this growing field to join your discussion today. I shall begin my remarks by explaining briefly my own commitment to borderlands and why I find it an exciting field of research. Then, I will turn to the problem of borders – as we experience it so

keenly in our own lives and in the turbulent borderlands we witness around the world – in order to bring our thoughts to the two questions I want especially to address this morning: (1) How do we perceive humanly crafted landscapes in the production of borderlands? (2) What are the frontiers of *indigeneity* in the crossroads of imperial spheres? How do different ethnic identities emerge from the historical processes that shape borderlands and in what ways do these identities become “indigenous” in diverse physical and social spaces?

To acquaint you briefly with my own experience, my commitment to borderlands is deeply personal and an integral part of my professional formation. Having lived nearly two decades in northwestern Mexico, my perception of the greater Sonoran Desert as a transitional space both culturally and ecologically has sharpened my awareness of borderlands that transcends the binational *border* between Mexico and the U.S. I have learned that living in the borderlands means embracing linguistic transitions, becoming attuned to gradual changes in climate and vegetation, and appreciating the chronological depth and spatial breadth of migratory patterns that describe the formation of communities and become ingrained in the quotidian routines of extended families. I began my career as a research historian working for Mexico’s Instituto Nacional de Antropología e Historia in the Centro Regional del Noroeste (now the Centro Sonora) where my work in the state archives was guided by my conversations with colleagues in archaeology and cultural anthropology and through my visits over bumpy unpaved roads to modern rural communities that were built on the foundations of colonial missions. My first publication on the Pimería Alta – spanning present-day northern Sonora and southern Arizona – was spurred by my initial archival findings that revealed two sets of communities that shared uneasily the domestic and agricultural spaces of early nineteenth-

century municipalities in Sonora. This rather simple observation led me to appreciate the political and cultural palimpsests of O'odham (Pima) and Hispanic villagers in what became intensely local borderlands distributed along the river valleys traversing the arid basin and range topography of central and northern Sonora. Their communities had deep roots, in some cases extending to pre-contact settlements; yet, their historical trajectories were marked by high levels of spatial mobility.

These reflections helped to guide the research that led from my doctoral dissertation to my first book published in the U.S., *Wandering Peoples: Colonialism, Ethnic Spaces, and Ecological Frontiers in Northwestern Mexico*.¹ The word *borderlands* does not appear in its title; to be honest, at the time it was published I wanted to distance my work somewhat from the Boltonian notion of borderlands. I chose instead “ecological frontiers” to convey the idea of environmentally grounded and porous frontiers through which different peoples passed and confronted one another over more than a century of historical development. Using the lens of social ecology, I asked how indigenous peoples endured in a colonial frontier that was marked by aridity and degrees of nomadism, but that was linked to the core institutions and economic circuits of New Spain and the early formative Mexican nation. When I embarked on my second major project, I knew that I wanted to reflect on the intersections between environmental, social, and cultural history and to focus on peoples who lived on the edges of the Iberian imperial spheres in the Americas. *Landscapes of Power and Identity* developed over a decade of research as a comparative study, responding to the question of how nature and culture are

¹ Cynthia Radding, *Wandering Peoples: Colonialism, Ethnic Spaces, and Ecological Frontiers in Northwestern Mexico* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997).

entwined in *longue durée* historical processes of survival and change.² Turning to South America I focused on the subtropical colonial province of Chiquitos, located between the semi-arid scrub forest of the Chaco Boreal and the rain forests of the Amazonian tributaries, a province that straddled the borderlands of the Spanish-American lowlands of Charcas and the Brazilian western savannas of Mato Grosso. Relatively understudied in the Anglophone literature, Chiquitos provided me with the opportunity to bring my work on Sonora into comparative perspective in order to research more deeply questions of indigeneity and cultural identity, native and colonial economies, land tenure and divergent notions of property in mobile societies, spiritual geographies, and conflict-fraught transitions from colonial to national rule. The divergent paths that Mexico and Bolivia followed during the independence struggles and in the formative decades of the nineteenth century allowed me to explore the different meanings of indigenous citizenship in the frontier provinces of Sonora and Chiquitos.

My current work over the last decade has embraced wholeheartedly the concept of borderlands, recognizing its power to express the complexity of historical processes in widely contrasting geographical settings and among diverse peoples. My thinking on the topic has been guided largely by two collaborative projects that illustrate the layered meanings of borderlands. The first of these was a symposium organized in 2011 by my university and King's College London, which led to the publication of *Borderlands in World History* with participants from places as distant as Russia and Singapore.³ Focused on the nineteenth and twentieth

² Cynthia Radding, *Landscapes of Power and Identity. Comparative Histories in the Sonoran Desert and the Forests of Amazonia from Colony to Republic* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

³ Paul Readman, Cynthia Radding, Chad Bryant, eds. *Borderlands in World History* (London and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2014).

centuries, the book that I co-edited and for which I wrote a chapter explored the historical landscapes and social networks in borderlands for selected regions of Africa, Europe, North America and the Caribbean as well as the Malaysian strait of Southeast Asia. The second project, *Borderlands of the Iberian World*, has consumed much of my life for the last three years as co-editor and author! It has been an exciting adventure that brought together 40 authors from different countries in Latin America, Europe, Canada and the U.S. to produce 34 chapters dedicated to borderlands of the Spanish and Portuguese imperial spheres that linked diverse peoples and regions of both North and South America and traced maritime networks across the Atlantic, Caribbean, and Pacific Oceans. Forthcoming in the Oxford University Press *Handbook* series, this volume explores the material and epistemological dimensions of borderlands through a multi-disciplinary prism from late pre-Columbian times to early national formations in the Americas. It gives pride of place to a myriad of indigenous, African-, Asian-, and European-descendant peoples who traversed and shaped different kinds of borderlands through trade, migration, and war as well as the production of knowledge in art, music, science, and cartography.

Our experience confirms that borderlands studies is an exciting field of scholarship, opening the way to comparative studies of environmental change, powerful indigenous federations that developed in both North and South America, gendered histories of women and men in the mixed and volatile social fabrics of borderlands, enslavement and the complex degrees of difference between freedom and bondage. "Borderlands" as a heuristic concept and a field of academic inquiry has widened the dimensions of interdisciplinary research in the last quarter-century at the same time that ethnohistorical approaches to imperialism and

colonialism have produced critical analyses of European imperial spheres in the Americas and other world regions.

Borders and Border Thinking

Keeping in mind this critical focus for the conceptual framework of borderlands, let us turn to the title of this conference and to your poster. The first session today has set up very well the issues we face with creating and resisting borders historically and in our own time as citizens and members of local communities. The photograph you have chosen conveys sharply the visual and material violence caused by the U.S. border fence in the millennial landscapes of the Sonoran and Chihuahuan Deserts, extending even to the Pacific Ocean. Built over three decades and four U.S. presidential administrations, portions of walls, fences, and virtual walls of sensors and cameras cover one-third of the 2,000 mile border between Mexico and the U.S. These barriers separate modern communities – like the one shown here – and tear apart the fabric of familial and social networks whose livelihood is grounded in the existence of the border and the economies it generates. These existing fences and the wall so loudly proclaimed by the Trump campaign and presidency cannot but remind us of the walls that have turned Palestine into an archipelago of communities in a war-torn arid land half a world away.

Borders in other historical contexts signify property demarcations and territorial enclosures. Boundaries are central to histories of land tenure, in which fences and walls serve as instruments to divide open spaces into measured parcels in the process of turning land, forests, and water into marketable commodities. Borders can also be part of local cultures: Joanne Rappaport in *Cumbé Reborn* noted that the Nasa communities of Colombia dig ditches

around the perimeter of their villages to defend their territorial claims.⁴ In a similar way many of us have observed agave stands or ocotillo living fences planted around household gardens and stone walls that mark family or community boundaries in areas characterized by small-scale peasant economies. Fences and the boundaries they signify can be either protective and inclusive or forbidding and exclusive. In August Wilson's award-winning play, *Fences*, sensitively rendered by Denzel Washington's directed film, Rose Maxson sings, "Jesus, be a fence all around me every day," and Jim Bono observes that Rose wants Troy to fence in their small back yard to hold in her loved ones, but others build fences to push people away and keep them out. Borders are deeply significant, then, in a number of different scales ranging from the intimate and communal to regional and international spheres.

Sandra M. Gonzales develops these themes on familial, regional, and binational scales in an essay titled, "Colonial Borders, Native Fences." Referring to the migratory experience of Mexicans who came to be known as Chicano/as in the U.S., Gonzales writes: "By internalizing these nationalize identities, we – Chicanos and other native people of the Americas – are internalizing borders imposed by foreign colonial powers. By internalizing these borders we are performing the separation of our own histories, our own knowledge structures. We are performing the separation of our own people, and in many cases our own families."⁵

⁴ Joanne Rappaport, *Cumbé Reborn: An Andean Ethnography of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press 1994).

⁵ Sandra M. Gonzales, "Colonial Borders, Native Fences: Building Bridges between Indigenous Communities through the Decolonization of the American Landscape," in *Comparative Indigeneities of the Americas. Toward a Hemispheric Approach*, edited by M. Bianet Castellanos, Lourdes Guiérrez Nájera, Arturo J. Aldama (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012) 309.

From Borders to Borderlands

Shifting our mental compass from fixed boundaries to liminal spaces, let us turn to borderlands. In my own work and for our purposes today, I propose two overlapping frameworks to underscore the different but interrelated meanings of the concept. Borderlands are physical spaces that can be experienced and apprehended in their material reality and changing contours. Equally so, borderlands become cultural spaces of commingling and exchange; as such, they may be understood as the artifacts of social networks that do not necessarily constitute bounded territories. As networks, they trace meaningful linkages among peoples, commodities, migratory pathways, and historical memories across geographical distances and political barriers.

The materiality of borderlands is closely tied to their natural and anthropogenic features. The internal river systems of South America comprehend a network of tributaries that flow into the Amazonian and Paraguayan basins, extending from the Brazilian pre-Cambrian shield in the east to the foothills of the Andean cordillera in the west. Their dramatic geographical contours and dense vegetation biomes shift through different transitional ecotones from rain forest and marshy wetlands to savanna (the *mato cerrado* or pampas) to thorny scrub forest (portions of the *chaco* and the *sertão*). On a continental scale, these fluvial networks and their surrounding land forms may be seen as one vast, interconnected borderland; yet, ecologically and culturally, they comprise identifiable regions whose histories of human occupation have rendered them meaningful spaces in different temporal frameworks. One such region are the wetlands of the Gran Pantanal, extending eastward from the upper Paraguayan river basin – itself a dense network of rivulets, swamps, and lagoons –

into the savannas of Mato Grosso in western Brazil. Diverse indigenous peoples inhabited and shaped the Pantanal and, beginning in the sixteenth century, it was described and claimed by both Portuguese and Spanish explorers and would-be conquistadors who advanced inward toward the fabled mineral wealth of the Andes from Asunción de Paraguay. One of the best-known of these aspiring *adelantados* was Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, whose *Comentarios* documented multiple encounters with different indigenous peoples in the fluvial borderlands of the Paraguayan basin.⁶ His expedition foundered as it approached the perimeter of the Pantanal, where it lost the navigable water way and the support of Indian allies that had the first stages of the journey. For the modern history of the Pantanal, a recent doctoral dissertation by Jason Kauffman has demonstrated the different kinds of extractive political economies that developed in and around the region through hunting, fishing, and the commercialization of exotic species as well as the slowly developing ecological values ascribed to these wetlands as a wildlife preserve. Following traditions well established for the Amazon by geographers and anthropologists like William Denevan, Peter Gow, William Balée, and Emilio Morán, Kauffman discredits the notion of “pristine” to show that these landscapes while seemingly “natural,” are humanly crafted to a large degree through processes that are both destructive and – at times – sustainable through local management of renewable resources.⁷

⁶ Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, *Comentarios de Alvar Núñez Cabeza de Vaca, adelantado y gobernador del Río de la Plata, escritos por Pedro Hernández, escribano y secretario de la provincia* (Madrid: Espasa-Calpe, 1971).

⁷ Jason Kauffman, “The Unknown Lands: Nature, Knowledge, and Society in the Pantanal of Brazil and Bolivia. Ph.D dissertation, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2015. Peter Gow, *An Amazon Myth and its History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Emilio Morán, *People and Nature: An Introduction to Human Ecological Relations* (Chichester, W. Sussex, UK: John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2017); William Balée, *Cultural Forests of the Amazon: A Historical Ecology of People and Their Landscapes* (Tuscaloosa: The University of Alabama Press, 2013); W. M. Denevan, *Cultivated Landscapes of Native Amazonia and the Andes: Triumph over the Soil* (Oxford, UK, NY: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Borderlands ecologies, then, are closely entwined with indigeneity through the mutual production of landscapes and peoples. Historians, archaeologists, ethnographers, and cultural geographers have documented the anthropogenic quality of distinct ecosystems in both neotropical and arid regions commonly viewed as frontiers or borderlands in the Americas, following methodologies developed by Carl O. Sauer, Robert West, Howard Scott Gentry, William Denevan, Marianne Schmink, William Doolittle, Gary Nabhan, Thomas Sheridan, Suzanne Fish, and Katherine Spielmann among other scholars⁸. The historical quality of these dynamic and mutually formative interactions between nature and culture is equally significant for the fragmentation and re-grouping of socially constituted identities through processes of ethnogenesis. What Stuart Schwartz and Frank Salomon have called the emergence of new peoples and new kinds of people through the violence of colonial encounters and displacements as well as the deeper and often times less visible histories of *convivencia* and commingling occurred throughout the Americas; yet, their fluidity is especially cogent for the borderlands.⁹ Furthermore, the layered meanings of indigeneity in the context of changing

⁸ Carl O. Sauer, "The Morphology of Landscape," in *Land and Life: A Selection of the Writings of Carl Sauer*, ed. John Leighly (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1963) 315-50; Robert West, *Sonora: Its Geographical Personality* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993); Howard Gentry, *Agaves of Continental North America* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1982); Suzanne K. Fish, Paul R. Fish, Charles Miksicek, and John Madsen. "Prehistoric Agave Cultivation in Southern Arizona," *Desert Plants* 7, 2 (1985): 107-112, 100; William E. Doolittle, *Canal Irrigation in Prehistoric Mexico. The Sequence of Technological Change* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990); Gary Nabhan, *Gathering the Desert* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985); Thomas E. Sheridan, *Where the Dove Calls: The Political Ecology of a Peasant Corporate Community in Northwestern Mexico* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1988); Marianne Schmink, *Contested Frontiers in Amazonia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992); Katherine Spielmann, *Farmers, Hunters and Colonists: Interaction between the Southwest and the Southern Plains* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1991).

⁹ Stuart Schwartz and Frank Salomon, "Introduction," p. 1-19, and "New Peoples and New Kinds of People: Adaptation, Readjustment, and Ethnogenesis in South American Indigenous Societies (Colonial Era)," p. 443-501, in F. Salomon and S. B. Schwartz, eds., *The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas*. Vol. 3. *South America* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

natural environments are constitutive of the geographical placement of borders and the contested power relations they signify. Jeffrey A. Erbig's recent article and dissertation analyze cartography and a wealth of documentation for the Banda Oriental of the Río de la Plata to show that the equestrian tribal peoples identified in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as Charrúas and Minuanes – ethnonyms that coalesced a number of indigenous bands and chieftaincies known as *toldos* – controlled much of these savannas and the feral livestock herds they sustained; however, as Spanish commercial and military forays advanced deeper into the pampas, their semi-nomadic toldos moved closer to the borders partially defined by the placement of colonial plazas and missions.¹⁰

As described for these two examples, borderlands scholarship for both North and South America has produced significant models for researching the longitudinal connections between the anthropogenic production of space and the historical production of culture in specific natural settings. Isabelle Combès, combining anthropological and historical research, has published innovative studies on the peoples of the wetlands of eastern Chiquitos, known as the *baños de Isozo*, and the northern Chaco Boreal. Following the formative ethnohistorical methods crafted by Thierry Saignes for the Chiriguano in the borderlands between the eastern Andean foothills and the lowland Oriente of Bolivia, Combès has disentangled the identities of Guaraní and Chanés claimed in different historical moments by diverse groups of the Isozo and the Chaco. Similarly, Erick Langer has carried the history of the Chiriguano into the republican

¹⁰ J. A. Erbig, Jr., "Imperial Lines, Indigenous Lands: Transforming Territorialities of the Río de la Plata, 1680-1805," Ph.D dissertation, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, 2015; "Borderline Offerings: *Tolerías* and Mapmakers in Eighteenth-Century Río de la Plata," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 96, 3 (2016).

period of Bolivian history through extensive research, and Lolita Gutiérrez de Brockington has turned her ethnohistorical lens to the African-descendant peoples of the Yungas.¹¹

Borderlands conceptual frameworks have informed the “new mission history” at the same time that the ethnohistorical research employed by scholars of mission encounters have enriched the cultural content of borderlands history. Building on the archival foundations of the early twentieth-century work by Bolton and his students (for the northern mission frontiers) and of scholars who advanced research on the architecture and institutional presence of Jesuit and Franciscan missions in the South American lowlands, more recent scholarship has brought the indigenous peoples into the center of the mission histories; for example, David Block for Moxos, Guillermo Wilde, Barbara Ganson, Thomas Whigham, and Julia Sarreal for the Guaraní, my work on the Chiquitos, and Susan Deeds’s *Defiance and Deference* for Nueva Vizcaya.¹²

For Brazil anthropological research on indigenous and Afro-Brazilian peoples is rich and voluminous. To address the ethnohistorical approaches to indigeneity, and especially within the framework of mutually formative processes of cultural and environmental change, the late John Monteiro and his colleagues and students have advanced the field of Brazilian borderlands

¹¹ Thierry Saignes, *Los Andes Orientales: historia de un olvido* (Lima: Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos, 1985); I. Combès, *Etno-historias del Isoso: Chané y chiriguano en el Chaco boliviano (siglos XVI a XX)* (La Paz and Lima: Programa de Investigación Estratégica en Bolivia, Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos, 2005); Erick Langer, *Expecting Pears from an elm Tree: Franciscan Missions on the Chiriguano Frontier in the Heart of South America, 1830-1949* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009); Lolita Gutiérrez de Brockington, *Blacks, Indians, and Spaniards in the Eastern Andes: reclaiming the forgotten in colonial Mizque, 1550-1782* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006).

¹² David Block, *Mission Culture on the Upper Amazon: Native Tradition, Jesuit Enterprise, and Secular Policy in Moxos, 1660-1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994); Guillermo Wilde, ed., *Saberes de la conversión. Jesuitas, indígenas e imperios coloniales en las fronteras de la cristiandad* (Buenos Aires: Editorial SB, 2011); Julia Sarreal, *The Guaraní and their Missions: A Socioeconomic History* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014); Barbara Ganson, *The Guaraní under Spanish Rule in the Río de la Plata* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003); Susan M. Deeds, *Defiance and Deference in Mexico’s Colonial North. Indians under Spanish Rule in Nueva Vizcaya* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2003).

scholarship in important ways. Monteiro's *Os negros da terra* is a pioneering and now classic study of Brazil's Indian peoples within colonialism, and his articles have explored concepts of both ethnocide and ethnogenesis. Hal Langfur's *Forbidden Lands* creates a theoretical model for colonial frontiers and places the survival of the Botucudo peoples in a spatial and historical framework of ethnogenesis. Izabel Missagia de Mattos, using ethnographic field work and archival research, has carried the history of the Botucudo peoples into the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to interpret their cultural survival despite enslavement and genocidal war. Mary Karasch has recently published *Before Brasília: frontier life in Central Brazil* (2016), the culmination of over a decade of research on the interior borderlands of Goiás, centered in its rivers and savannas, to create a rich narrative of its complex ethnic and cultural mixtures in this mining frontier. Heather Roller's *Amazonian Routes* places her study of the eighteenth-century indigenous communities during the post-Jesuit Directory in the spatial and ecological framework of the major tributaries and the myriad streams and canals that facilitated the survival of different kin groups through mobility.¹³

Employing similar, interdisciplinary methods of research, scholars who work on the vast borderlands of northern New Spain – encompassing significant territories of Mexico and the U.S. – have posed new questions regarding the interrelated processes of spatial and environmental transformations, colonial encounters, and the cultural patterns that traveled

¹³ John M. Monteiro, *Negros da Terra: Índios e Bandeirantes nas Origens de São Paulo* (São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 1994); Monteiro, "Tupis, Tapuias e Historiadores." Tese de Livre-Docência, Universidade Estadual de Campinas, 2001; Hal Langfur, *The Forbidden Lands: Colonial Identity, Frontier Violence, and the Persistence of Brazil's Eastern Indians, 1750-1830* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2006); Izabel Missagia de Mattos, *Civilização e Revolta. Os Botocudos e a catequese na província de Minas* (Bauru, SP: EDUSC, 2004); Mary Karasch, *Before Brasília: frontier life in Central Brazil* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2016); Heather Roller, *Amazonian Routes: Indigenous Mobility and Colonial Communities in Northern Brazil* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2014).

(and changed) along corridors of migration. Scholarship on the North American borderlands has built on the foundations stemming from archaeology and ethnohistorical sources concerning the long-term cultural connections between Mesoamerica and the peoples living seemingly beyond its borders in extended territories and widely different ecological settings. Research combining new material evidence from carefully designed and executed archaeological studies and expanded archival sources has complicated in creative ways the meanings traditionally ascribed to the Chichimecs – a generic ethnonym applied to widely varied, semi-nomadic peoples whom the Spaniards encountered in Querétaro, Guanajuato, Zacatecas, and other points during their sixteenth-century forays into the north in search of mines. At the same time, over the last quarter century archaeologists, linguists, historians, geographers, biologists, and ethnographers have brought to light a far richer panorama of cultural contacts than was previously known between the northern and western boundaries of Mesoamerica – among Nahua, Purépecha and Otomían peoples – and the indigenous peoples of northern Mexico and the U.S. Southwest who shared Mesoamerican traditions of agriculture, language, and ritual.¹⁴

A representative collection of this innovative and interdisciplinary research was published in three volumes entitled *Vías del Noroeste* (2006-2013), following two important collective works that enrich our understanding of the cultural matrices of these northern borderlands: *La gran chichimeca: la tierra de las rocas secas* (2001) and *Nómadas y sedentarios* (2000), illustrating the complex, long-term patterns of cultural change throughout the northern borderlands.¹⁵

¹⁴ Fernando Berrojalbiz, *Paisajes y Fronteras del Durango prehispánico* (Mexico City: UNAM, 2012); Chantal Cramaussel, *Poblar la frontera. La provincia de Santa Bárbara en Nueva Vizcaya durante los siglos XVI y XVII* (Zamora, Michoacán: El Colegio de Michoacán, 2006).

¹⁵ Carlo Bonfiglioli, Arturo Gutiérrez, María Eugenia Olavarría, eds. *Las vías del noroeste I: Una macrorregión indígena americana*. Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, 2006; Carlo Bonfiglioli, Arturo Gutiérrez, Marie-Areti Hers, María Eugenia Olavarría, eds. *Las vías*

Equally significant is the work carried out for northeastern Mexico in what today is Nuevo León, Coahuila and Tamaulipas, extending to the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean, and southeastern U.S. To further complicate the notion of indigeneity, Cecilia Sheridan Prieto's recently published *Fronterizando el espacio*, brings together theoretically informed and empirically grounded ethnohistorical research on the northeastern borderlands. Amy Bushnell Turner has contributed focused studies on Spanish Florida, best known for *Situado and Sabana*, as well as critical syntheses of borderlands scholarship that inspire us to up-end comfortable categories and re-think the resilience of native peoples in the lands that they continued to control long after European contact.¹⁶

As for South America, indigeneity in the northern borderlands scholarship is not limited to "Indians"; rather African-descendant and a wide range of mixed and re-emergent ethnicities have produced the histories and landscapes of these historically changing territories. Jane Landers has pioneered in the systematic research and collaborative projects to find, preserve, and catalog archival materials in order to bring into greater visibility African peoples of Florida

del noroeste II: Propuesta para una perspectiva sistemática e interdisciplinaria (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, 2008); Carlo Bonfiglioli, Arturo Gutiérrez, Marie-Areti Hers, Danna Levin, eds. *Las vías del noroeste III: genealogías, transversalidades y convergencia* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, 2011); Beatriz Braniff C., ed. *La gran chichimeca. El lugar de la rocas secas* (Mexico City and Milán: Consejo Nacional para la Cultura y las Artes, Editoriale Jaca Book SpA, 2001; Hers, Marie-Areti, José Luis Mirafuentes, María de los Dolores Soto, Miguel Vallebuena, eds. *Nómadas y sedentarios en el norte de México. Homenaje a Beatriz Braniff* (Mexico City: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Instituto de Investigaciones Antropológicas, Instituto de Investigaciones Estéticas, Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas, 2000).

¹⁶ Sheridan Prieto, Cecilia. *Fronterización del espacio hacia el norte de la Nueva España* (Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, Instituto Mora, 2015); Amy Turner Bushnell, *Situado and Sabana: Spain's Support System for the Presidio and Mission Provinces of Florida*. Foreword by David Hurst Thomas (New York: American Museum of Natural History. Anthropological Paper 74, distributed by the University of Georgia Press, 1994).

and the Caribbean. Within the Mexican historiography, traditional understandings of *indigenismo* have given way to increasing emphasis on Afro-mestizos and their undeniable demographic and cultural presence throughout Mexico, including its northern and southern borderlands. Extant parish records for a number of urban and mining centers in northern Mexico – Zacatecas, Parral, Alamos, to name only a few – reveal the presence of both African-descendant laborers (mainly free) and established barrios of indigenous migrants who were settled permanently or seasonally in the mining reales. Dana Velasco Murillo’s recently published *Urban Indios* brings to light innovative social research on these indigenous clusters and the ways in which they governed their political and religious lives in the colonial city of Zacatecas.¹⁷

An important part of the enduring Mesoamerican cultural presence in northern Mexico stems from the phenomenon of *Indios conquistadores*, the colonies of sponsored and voluntary migrants who established pueblos and barrios in San Luis Potosí, Saltillo, Parras, and New Mexico. If the Tlaxcaltecs are the best known among these Mesoamerican transplants – in large measure because they chronicled their story so well – other Nahuatl-speaking, Purépecha, and Otomí peoples established enduring communities in the northern borderlands of New Spain and in the southern borderlands of Guatemala. Danna Levin Rojo, Laurent Corbeil, Sean McEnroe, Yanna Yannakakis, and Laura Matthews – among other authors – have advanced new research and innovative interpretations regarding the undeniable demographic presence of Mesoamerican migratory colonies in these far-flung borderlands, their political skills to govern

¹⁷ Dana Velasco Murillo, *Urban Indians in a Silver City. Zacatecas, Mexico, 1546-1810* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016).

their communities and press their claims to privileges before colonial authorities, and their significant imprint in the languages and cosmologies of the peoples and territories where they settled.¹⁸

Conclusions

To conclude, let us bring together the three strands of nature, imperial spheres, and indigeneity in the borderlands. This overview has attempted to illustrate the innovative conceptual frameworks and historiographical advances that have energized the field of borderlands studies and brought it into conversation with interdisciplinary methods of research in many different regions of the Americas and the world. The principal ideas that I want to leave with you concern the necessary linkages between nature as it is viewed through humanly crafted landscapes, population movements and cultural change, and the transitional and translational quality of borderlands as contested territories and spaces of encounter.

There are important themes and regions yet to cover, especially the powerful indigenous confederations of the South American pampas, spanning the western and eastern flanks of the southern Andes, and the mounted Comanches and Utes of the southern Great Plains of North America. The impressive territorial and political power of these confederations – and the exchange networks they controlled – have made it clear that Europeans were not the

¹⁸ Danna A. Levin Rojo, *Return to Aztlán. Indians, Spaniards, and the Invention of Nuevo México* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2014); Sean F. McEnroe, *From Colony to Nationhood in Mexico: Laying the Foundations, 1560-1840* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Laurent Corbeil, "Identities in Motion. The Formation of a Plural Indio Society in Early San Luis Potosí, New Spain, 1591-1630," Ph.D Dissertation, McGill University, 2015; Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-Between. Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008); Laura E. Matthew, *Memories of Conquest: becoming Mexicano in Colonial Guatemala* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012).

only empire-builders in the Americas. Guillaume Boccara, Raul Mandrini, and Ingrid de Jong – to name only three scholars who, with additional collaborators, have documented the historical periods of expansion, negotiation, and retreat of the mounted captaincies and bands of Pehuenches, Huilliches, and many others that came to be known under the ethnonyms of Araucanos or Mapuches.¹⁹ For the North American Great Plains and the Colorado Basin, Pekka Hämäläinen, Brian DeLay, James Brooks, Ned Blackhawk, and Jennifer Denetdale – among other historians and anthropologists – have narrated as well the complex inter-ethnic violence, captivity, and trade that drew Athapaskan, Shoshonean, and other band peoples into shifting alliances and warring skirmishes among different indigenous nations and with colonial settlers and authorities.²⁰

David J. Weber’s lifetime of scholarship, teaching, and mentorship did so much to renovate the field of borderlands history. Through his final project, *Bárbaros! Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment*, Weber brought together borderlands scholars working in both North and South America. This important work focuses principally on what Weber and other scholars have called “independent Indians,” the peoples and territories that

¹⁹ Guillaume Boccara, *Guerre et ethnogenèse mapuche dans le Chili colonial: l’invention du soi* (Paris: L’Harmattan, 1998); Raul Mandrini, ed., *Vivir entre dos mundos: conflicto y convivencia en las fronteras del sur de la Argentina, siglos XVIII y XIX* (Buenos Aires: Taurus, 2006); Ingrid de Jong, Antonio Escobar O. eds., *Las poblaciones indígenas en la conformación de las naciones y los Estados en la América Latina decimonónica* (Mexico City and Zamora, Michoacán: CIESAS, El Colegio de Michoacán, 2016).

²⁰ Pekka Hämäläinen, *Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008); James F. Brooks, *Captives & Cousins. Slavery, Kinship, and Community in the Southwest Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture, 2002); Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts. Indian Raids and the U.S. Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, published in association with the William P. Clements Center, Southern Methodist University, 2008); Jennifer Nez Denetdale, *Reclaiming Diné History. The Legacies of Navajo Chief Manuelito and Juanita* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007); Ned Blackhawk, *Violence over the Land* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008); Andrés Reséndez, *The Other Slavery: The Uncovered Story of Indian Enslavement in America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016).

remained beyond the effective control of any imperial power; yet, like Richard White's Middle Ground for a different frontier in the *pais d'en haute* of the Great Lakes, the impressive circuits of power wielded by the autonomous bands of the plains had a beginning and an end; they were historically circumscribed in time and place.²¹

I have chosen to concentrate my remarks today on some of the regions and peoples who shaped borderlands within the interstices of Spanish and Portuguese imperial spheres, undeniably opening spaces for negotiation that, in turn, forced changes in the colonial project. I welcome your questions and comments, and I hope that the ideas I have shared with you will open discussion for fruitful debate.

²¹ David J. Weber, *Bárbaros! Spaniards and their Savages in the Age of Enlightenment* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005); Richard White, *The Middle Ground. Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).