

### **The Indigenous Authorship of the Narratives of the Spanish Jesuit Mission of Ajacán (1570-1572)**

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In 1570, according to numerous retellings, a Powhatan Indian named Don Luis returned to his homeland near the Chesapeake Bay after an absence of nearly a decade (Brickhouse, Gradie, Kupperman, Mallios, Rountree, and Weber). He accompanied a group of Spaniards composed of two Jesuit priests, nine Jesuit brothers, and an adolescent servant; their goal was to establish a religious mission called Ajacán to convert Native Americans living in the region now known as Virginia (USA). Perhaps as a ploy to return to his homeland, Don Luis had volunteered his former tribe as likely converts to Christianity and himself as interpreter and assistant to the mission (Varner). Ten years earlier, Don Luis had been taken willingly or by force to Spanish lands, where he converted to the Catholic faith, took a Spanish name, and received a formal Dominican education. He had even been presented to Spain's King Philip II as a model of converted Native piety and loyalty. Don Luis also spent considerable time in New Spain, where he learned from other indigenous leaders about the Spaniards' treatment of the lands and peoples they had conquered.

Don Luis proved neither loyal nor pious soon after his arrival in Ajacán. After a cursory period of apparent cooperation, he abandoned the mission to live in a Powhatan village. His physical and cultural remove from the mission proper intensified the missionaries' struggles to make converts and barter for critically needed supplies. When the Spanish priests attempted to force their interpreter-guide to return to the mission grounds, Don Luis ordered the murder of all of the Jesuits at Ajacán. The only Spaniard who survived was the non-Jesuit servant Alonsico, who was hidden by a native strongman. Don Luis, whose Indian name remains unknown, disappeared. After the murders, the Indians brazenly wore the dead Jesuits' robes in hopes of luring unsuspecting Spanish ships to shore to share the fate of the unwary Jesuits (Gradie 167). Incensed by the Indians' actions, a punitive search party organized by the Jesuit order and the martial governor of the borderland Spanish territory of La Florida rescued the lone Ajacán survivor and held a show trial in 1572. The retaliatory execution of a handful of Powhatan Indians enraged their survivors; Jamestown settlers some four decades later recorded the tribe's sustained odium of the Spanish.

The story of Ajacán is contained in a series of Jesuit letters written both during and after the massacre.<sup>1</sup> In their writings, the Jesuits strove to understand how and why

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<sup>1</sup> The story of Don Luis and the Powhatans of Virginia was first recorded in a series of five letters and narratives written by Spanish Jesuits in the four decades following the massacre. Two twentieth-century Jesuit scholars, Clifford M. Lewis and Albert J. Loomie, compiled these accounts in their 1953 book, *The Spanish Jesuit Mission in Virginia, 1570-1572*. The Spanish records describe Don Luis in

Don Luis betrayed his superiors. However, despite their careful and thoughtful analysis of the situation in their letters, the Jesuits failed to notice that the original source of their story was not really the young Spaniard Alonsico, but instead it was the Powhatan Don Luis himself. A marginal note in the text indicates that Alonsico was not present at the massacre, and therefore depended upon Don Luis for the story he told his rescuers. Anna Brickhouse suggests that this note provides a space for a “counternarrative [...] of violent resistance to the colonizers” to the Jesuits’ story, but I disagree with her marginalization of Don Luis’ role in the story of Ajacán as merely one “a set of twinned, internal narrators” (30, 19). Alonsico’s absence transforms Don Luis into the primary author of the Jesuits’ accounts. I argue that Don Luis is the main author of the Jesuit stories of the mission at Ajacán, and that his actions were not merely an instance of “violent resistance to the colonizers” but rather calculated symbolic attack on the Spanish empire. With his transatlantic and transcultural education, Don Luis orchestrated the massacre as an offensive strike against the Spaniards. He crafted a story through physical violence and the power of language that was so horrific that it would deter colonization of his tribe’s land. Under Don Luis’ direction, the Powhatans not only thwarted Spanish expansion into the Chesapeake Bay but also duped the Spanish into immortalizing their small band’s triumph over a redoubtable foe by co-opting the servant boy Alonsico as their mouthpiece for ensuring that their story reached Spain. Don Luis’ authorial action will be explained through a close reading of the Jesuit letters in conjunction with anthropological and historical data chronicling Spanish colonization efforts.

Don Luis’ authorial presence is felt from the first letter regarding Ajacán written by the founders of the Ajacán mission themselves, Fathers Luis de Quirós and Juan Baptista de Segura. Dated September 12, 1570, it is the only narrative in the Lewis and Loomie collection composed by the missionaries themselves. However, these two Spanish clerics’ view of Ajacán was tempered by Don Luis as the sole translator, which placed him in a position of power over both the Jesuits and the Powhatans (Brickhouse 22-23). Although I agree that Don Luis’ translation abilities grant him power over both groups, Brickhouse’s analysis does not consider that the respect that the Powhatans grant Don Luis may have little to do with his linguistic skills and more to do with his status as a returning Powhatan aristocrat. According to the Spanish functionary Bartolomé Martínez’s text, Don Luis’ aristocratic status led to his selection to receive an education in Spain, where he studied under the Dominicans in Seville and Havana, making it likely that he knew precisely what the Jesuits prayed for as missionaries and how to manipulate their expectations and actions (Lewis and Loomie 148). Moreover, he would know what the Powhatans wished to hear from the missionaries as well, and it is entirely possible that he intentionally fostered tensions between the two groups in order to strengthen his own position. The written words of

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contradictory terms: in early accounts, he is portrayed as the subservient native guide of the expedition; later, he is execrated as the cunning, morally adrift engineer of the Jesuits’ execution.

the Jesuit priests in this letter should therefore be read as the persuasive arguments of Don Luis' dominant voice.

The first part, written by Father Quirós, employs several biblical tropes to describe the people and places of the Chesapeake Bay to support the Jesuits' decision to stay in Ajacán. The second part is written by Father Baptista, who makes little mention of the Powhatans and focuses instead on entreaties for supplies from Spain for the beleaguered mission. The third part of the letter, an addendum by Quirós, details how Don Luis' skillful management of a negative encounter between the Spanish and the Powhatans convinced the Jesuits, despite initial misgivings, to stay to set up the mission without recourse to the typical military support.

Details from Father Quirós' addendum are particularly telling. He begins with a visual survey of Don Luis' homeland, mentioning the Spaniards' surprise and disappointment to see so few Indians near the Chesapeake Bay and to find soil of such poor quality for cultivation. In contrast to the glowing reports of conquistadors from Columbus to Cortés who compared the lands of the Americas to the Garden of Eden, such adverse comments indicate that Ajacán was in fact an unlikely locale for successful colonization. It is puzzling that Father Quirós describes the land using the trope of *locus eremus*: "Our Lord had punished the land with six years of famine and plagues that have been the cause of the land being much less populated than what it used to be" (Lewis and Loomie 85; unless otherwise noted, all translations are Lewis and Loomie's). This description suggests that Don Luis had described the land as the opposite of the *locus eremus*, the *lugar amoenus*, or an earthly Garden of Eden, to dupe the would-be colonizers into supposing his homeland was an ideal site for a Jesuit mission.

The third part of Father Quirós' letter, written only a few days later, includes a list of the many problems now facing the Jesuits. First, they are in a very isolated place, far from the bay where the Spanish ships can easily reach them. Second, and more alarmingly, the Jesuits can no longer depend on Don Luis' tribe for the gifts of food that are essential for the poorly provisioned mission's survival. Third, Quirós notes that Don Luis is the only link that the Jesuits have between themselves and the Indians. Despite the precariousness of their situation, Father Quirós reveals that the Jesuits elected to remain in Ajacán. It appears that just as Don Luis had convinced them to come to Ajacán, once there he successfully convinced the Jesuits to stay. Father Quirós notes with great relief that while problems simmer between Spaniards and Powhatans, Don Luis remains suitably faithful to the Jesuits.

Two years passed before the appearance of a second report. In a letter dated August 28, 1572, Juan Rogel, the lead Jesuit brother charged with finding the lost Jesuits of Ajacán, reveals their tragic fate. Rogel summarizes the results of his expedition: he quickly learned from information networks along the East Coast of North America that the Jesuits had been killed, and that Alonso had survived. After a description of how the Spanish cleverly tricked an indigenous *cacique*, or local strongman, forcing him to return the young survivor, Rogel asserts that his story is

transcribed testimony of Alonsico's eyewitness report of the events leading up to and including the Jesuits' massacre. Rogel fails to consider the possibility that he is being tricked by the Powhatans, who may be only pretending to want to keep Alonsico with them. Surely Don Luis realized that allowing the Spaniards to view Alonsico as a prize grants his words greater weight among his fellow countrymen.

Alonsico's story, as told to Rogel, provides a perspective on Don Luis at variance with that reported by the Jesuit missionaries. In this retelling, Don Luis is by no means the loyal, subservient peacekeeper; in fact, it is Don Luis who incited a revolution among his fellow Powhatans to kill the Jesuits. To counter any suggestion that such action would increase Don Luis' stature as a man of significant authority, Rogel disparages Don Luis' leadership role by describing the other Powhatans involved as natural-born followers who could, in the absence of the duplicitous Don Luis, be trained to follow Spanish orders.

Rogel further emphasizes the contrast between what he views as Don Luis' rebellious nature and the obedient disposition of the other Powhatans by detailing how the Powhatans rescued the Jesuits' servant, Alonsico. Alonsico had wanted to die with the Jesuits, Rogel informs his readers, but a "*cacique* brother" of Don Luis restrained and then spirited Alonsico away to the *cacique*'s own settlement to protect him from Don Luis (Lewis and Loomie 106). According to Rogel, Don Luis "has skulked around [...] trying very hard to get at the boy to kill him, because if he did, then there would be no one who could tell of what happened to [the Jesuits]; but because of the fear that [Don Luis] had of this *cacique* with whom the boy was living, [Don Luis] ceased and desisted [in his efforts to kill the boy]" (Lewis and Loomie 106; Article author's translation).

Further confirmation of the intent to portray Don Luis as a rebel is evident in Lewis' and Loomie's 20th-century translation of Rogel's letter from Spanish to English: the modern Jesuit translators use the English word *renegade* as a synonym for Don Luis although neither this nor a similar word appears in the Spanish version written in the 16th century (105, 109).<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Rogel denies Don Luis his own agency and authority by assigning him fear of Spanish punishment. Rogel's description of the actions of the *cacique* nearly transforms the strongman into a type of indigenous governor of the Spanish Empire whose protection of Alonsico is a sentimental choice that also serves to preserve the truth, through Alonsico's testimony, for a future Spanish tribunal.

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<sup>2</sup> Several elements of the 1953 English translation of the 1572 letter suggest that the work is as much an interpretation as it is a translation. Lewis and Loomie condense sentences, reorganize paragraphs, and insert words, such as "renegade," to express their opinion of the events described by Rogel. The word that appears in the original sentence, "lo," is used as a masculine direct object pronoun: "[Y] como *lo* embió dos vezes a llamar y no vino, determiné de embiar al P. Quirós y al Hermano Gabriel de Solís y al Hermano Juan Baptista al pueblo deste *cacique*, que está preso, adonde estaba entonces don Luis, para que lo llevassen consigo, y de camino rescatassen maíz," whereas the closest English translation is "Father Master Baptista sent a message by a novice Brother on two occasions to the *renegade*" (105, 109) [emphasis mine].

The third letter in the series appeared in 1609. Juan de la Carrera, a Jesuit brother who had known Don Luis and other members of the Ajacán mission, crafted a narrative that granted far more agency to Don Luis than Juan Rogel's story. Carrera asserts that he had met the missionaries in the Spanish New World settlement of Santa Elena, the site of present-day Parris Island, South Carolina, and gave them religious provisions for the mission to Ajacán. Carrera later took part in Juan Rogel's expedition to rescue the servant Alonsico from the Powhatan Indians. The theme of Carrera's narrative is his own cleverness; he offers numerous examples to prove that he alone had detected Don Luis' treacherous character long before the mission to Ajacán.

His narrative can also be read as an oblique acknowledgement of the power that Don Luis had over the Spanish in general, and the Spanish Jesuits and his fellow Powhatans in particular.

Carrera describes Don Luis as well loved by the Spanish, especially by such political and religious eminences as King Philip II; Don Luis de Velasco, the viceroy of New Spain and the godfather of his Powhatan namesake; and Father Baptista of the Ajacán mission. Despite their exalted positions and the humble Carrera's warning, they failed to recognize Don Luis' malfeasance:

But I pointed out the difficulty in the execution of the plan, saying that the Indian did not satisfy me, and judging from what he had told me, I saw that he was a liar. I begged and entreated him [Father Baptista] to examine the plan more thoroughly, to talk it over with the Fathers present and to decide what was best in conformity with their advice. The idea of a superior wanting to go to such remote and distant lands relying on an Indian, leaving everything behind, without a guard of soldiers or any people other than his own [Jesuits], was in my opinion not as good as that of having another Father go and travel light to look around the country and see what there was in the whole notion and learn if the Indian was lying or telling the truth. That is how it looked to me. (Lewis and Loomie 132)

Carrera's interpretation of Don Luis' actions as treachery provides ample evidence of what may also be viewed as Don Luis' loyalty to himself and his fellow Powhatans. According to Carrera's story of the mission, after Fathers Quirós and Baptista sent the Spanish ships away, Don Luis led the Jesuits into the interior of the land, far away from waters navigable by Spanish ships. Carrera criticizes Don Luis for his actions: "This bad Indian saw himself as the lord of Father Baptista and of his Jesuit children and of all that they carried, without fearing anyone [...]; this bad Indian and Judas, publically embraced vice and sin without fear of God or man, and divorced himself from his conversion and education" (Lewis and Loomie 132). From this passage, it is clear that the Jesuit Carrera accused Don Luis of rejecting Spanish culture in favor of his native culture.

Don Luis' greatest rejection of Spanish culture can be found in Carrera's report of the murderous attack on the Jesuits. He divides his description into two parts: the murder of Father Quirós and the Jesuits who went in search of Don Luis, and the strike on the remaining Jesuits in their settlement. In the first, Carrera describes Don Luis so vividly as a traitor that he can use *antonomasia* when he refers to the "traitor" with the readers' understanding that Don Luis is the traitor who has come to kill the Jesuits (Lewis and Loomie 126). Don Luis takes the Jesuits utterly by surprise. The speed of the unanticipated attack is reflected in the brevity of its description in Carrera's text. He includes a graphic description of the Jesuits' futile attempt to escape, as blood gushed from their wounds, to the protection of the mountain, but he saves the use of amplification to describe the second massacre of the most important men of the mission.

Like Rogel, Carrera singles Don Luis out as the leader of the attacks. His description of Don Luis' plan highlights the Powhatan leader's cunning. Don Luis and his men ask to borrow the mission's axes and machetes to cut firewood on the mountain; the Jesuit priest gladly agrees. After waiting for a few hours, the Powhatans, by then dressed in the clothing that they had taken from the bodies of the first group of Jesuits they had killed, go to the remaining Jesuits' house. Carrera reports that Don Luis is greeted by an unsuspecting Father Baptista's "'You are very welcome, Don Luis!' Certainly before he got any further the Indian replied with his axe and gave him many blows on the head, the arms, the legs and his whole body.'" Don Luis and the rest of his group used their borrowed machetes and axes to kill the remaining Jesuits (Lewis and Loomie 127, 136). The impact of Carrera's use of feigned speech within quotation marks is jarring. By quoting Father Baptista, Carrera establishes ethos and transfers the authority of the director to his own as author. The story continues with an appeal to pathos, through a comparison of the Jesuits to lambs and the Indians to wolves (Lewis and Loomie 127-28, 136).

Despite Don Luis' leadership during the massacre, Carrera effectively dismisses Don Luis as a powerful figure with his conclusion, courtesy of Alonso: "As the boy [Alonso] recalls, the wicked Indian who fostered this crime, though evil and hardened in his errors and sins, was so touched at seeing them dead that he wept copiously and called them martyrs," then asked Alonso to lead him in preparing a Christian burial for the Jesuits (Lewis and Loomie 128, 136). Don Luis' unexpected change of heart is necessary for Carrera's story. On one hand, Carrera represents himself as the only person clever enough to foresee Don Luis' treachery. On the other hand, Carrera must also support the power of the Jesuits' teachings. Carrera uses Don Luis' change of heart to underscore the triumph of religion and Spanish culture over indigenous culture. This victory is confirmed in the next anecdote, in which three murdering Indians are themselves killed, presumably by divine intervention, as soon as they try to rob a crucifix from a Jesuit's lifeless body. This seems a likely embellishment by Carrera, because it does not appear in Rogel's account.

While Don Luis does not appear again in Carrera's story, it is interesting to note a striking similarity in a vignette in Father Quirós' letter and in Carrera's story. Quirós describes how the Indians viewed Don Luis upon his return to his homeland as "revived and returned from heaven," which seems to be an allegorical reference to the resurrection of Christ. For Carrera, this comparison was, of course, completely invalid and inappropriate for the mastermind behind the massacre of the Jesuits. Instead, Carrera reports that when the Powhatans saw the rescue party, which included Jesuit brothers, they "were struck dumb believing that we were the resurrected [Jesuits they had massacred]" (Lewis and Loomie 130). In his version of the history, therefore, it is the Jesuits, not the Powhatans, who were ultimately in control in the New World.

The fourth document in the series, the "The Relation of John Rogel," was written sometime between 1607 and 1611, or approximately 35 years after his first letter regarding Ajacán. While the exact date of composition is in dispute, it seems to belong to the same group of *relaciones*, or stories, as Juan de la Carrera's. Rogel's second narrative contains two seismic shifts from his first: in this account he is conscious of Don Luis' manipulation of truth, and meditates on the Jesuits' failure to recognize his power.

This story, like that of Juan de la Carrera, also begins with the education of Don Luis and the favors he received from important religious and political figures, including the king of Spain. Rogel describes Don Luis as "very *ladino* [...]" because he promoted himself as the son of a great *cacique* to win the trust of Father Baptista (Lewis and Loomie 115). *Ladino* is a word with several potential, overlapping meanings in Spanish. As an adjective, it means astute or savvy. It is also, significantly, used to describe a person who has a great facility for foreign languages. Historically, *ladino* was the term for Sephardic Jews in Spain, and came to be used as a term for a Spanish-speaking *mestizo*, or a person with both indigenous and Spanish racial heritage (RAE). By using the term *ladino*, Rogel acknowledges Don Luis' intelligence and defines Don Luis as a person who simultaneously belongs to two linguistic and cultural communities. In this letter, Rogel grants Don Luis a greater sense of self-determination, separate from a Spanish Christian storyline of sin and repentance.

To begin, Rogel attributes the failure of the expedition not to Don Luis' treachery but to Father Baptista's ill-advised decision to send the pilot of the ship away from Ajacán on the day of their arrival. This abandonment, asserts Rogel, would not have occurred if the ship had remained with the Jesuits for a few more days. Rogel describes Don Luis' descent into moral depravity without dwelling on details, centering on his abandonment of the Jesuits because they did not suit his needs in his own community. The scene of Father Baptista's murder in Rogel's story is short, bloodless, and simply told: "Raising his club and giving his greeting were really one gesture, and so in wishing him well, he killed him" (Lewis and Loomie 116, 119). Don Luis suffers no Christian crisis of contrition after the massacre, nor does he threaten the adolescent Alonsico; rather, he allows Alonsico to show him how to bury the Jesuits according to Catholic custom. Although Rogel interprets this action as a kind

act of charity, it should also be viewed as a tool to indoctrinate Alonsico. Showing this young servant the bodies of his former masters must have encouraged him to cooperate with Don Luis and to be grateful to him for sparing his life.

Rogel, like Carerrea, mentions the Indians' dressing in the clothing of the dead Jesuits, and gives Don Luis credit for organizing the masquerade. In his version,

Don Luis was very eager for [the Spanish who came on the rescue ship] to land so as to overwhelm and kill them. The Indians, noticing that [the Spanish] were wary and watching for the appearance of the Fathers, used this stratagem. Taking the robes of the dead Fathers, they put them on and walked along the shore, and the rest of the Indians called out that there were the Fathers and to come ashore. (Lewis and Loomie 117, 120)

Rogel provides no explanation for the decision of the Powhatans to dress in the dead Jesuits' clothing, except to emphasize the intention of the act: to deceive and intimidate the Spanish. The Spanish were not tricked, however, and remained on their ship as the Powhatans paddled out in canoes to assault them. The Spanish repelled the attack and took Powhatan prisoners. Don Luis was not among them.

An important part of Rogel's earlier letter is the respect that all the Indians but Don Luis have for Spanish sovereignty. This theme is not repeated in his later version. Of the two Indians held captive by the Spaniards, Rogel reports that one escaped by jumping off the ship and presumably drowning; the other, although tortured, refused to speak to the Spanish and subsequently died of disease. In Rogel's retelling, Don Luis holds the power: he escapes capture, yet still manages to communicate in a terrifying psychological and physical operation his refusal to comply with Spanish colonization efforts. This message is at odds with the Jesuits' story of Don Luis' religiously-motivated sense of guilt for killing the Fathers.

The spoken story of the preceding four Jesuits' accounts remains based on the presumed eyewitness, Alonsico, the Spanish servant adopted by the Powhatans for two years before his rescue. However, as the fifth text, written by the famous Jesuit historian Pedro de Ribadeneyra and published between 1592 and 1605, reveals, the actual source for the story of the Ajacán murders was not Alonsico's own eyes at all. Lewis and Loomie point out an interesting marginal note at the end of Ribadeneyra's story: "*(The youth was named Alonso de Olmos, and he was not present at the martyrdom, as he recounts)* (emphasis added)" (Lewis and Loomie 147; Appendix). Only Don Luis and the Powhatans –not the much quoted Alonsico– were surviving eyewitnesses of the Jesuits' murders. Don Luis alone is the mastermind behind the entire story of Ajacán –from the plan to set up a mission in the Chesapeake Bay to the execution of all of the Spaniards, except Alonsico, the one person who can transmit the story to the Spaniards without suffering personal retribution.

Given this background, I posit the following explanation of the likely true story of Ajacán: the Powhatans, armed with the insight provided by the dual-cultural Don Luis,



were able to construct a story of the massacre designed to include elements that would most distress Spanish Christian colonizers. Knowing that the Spanish would return to the Chesapeake Bay, the tribe decided the best conduit for the shattering story of the Jesuit murders was Alonsico, who would in time become fluent in both languages. Alonsico learned and internalized their version of the massacre story during the interval until the Spanish returned to the Chesapeake Bay.

A marginal note from Rogel's first letter now gains great relevance to the analysis. He expresses annoyance that Alonsico preferred living with the Powhatans to returning to the Spanish community: "In this I was mistaken, for he was much corrupted after living alone among Indians, he does not want to be with us, he is not suitable." We can confidently state that Alonsico's staying was not part of the Powhatans' plan for long-term liberation from the Spanish. The Powhatans had proven themselves fully capable of hiding persons they did not want the Spanish to find: Don Luis, for example, never reappeared, despite torturous Spanish search efforts. Likewise, we can assume that the tribe was fully capable of returning captives without their liberators' suspecting their true motives. In this case, Alonsico left unwittingly with a well-rehearsed Powhatan message to the Spanish: stay out of the Chesapeake Bay, or else!

Critics of this argument may say that it is possible that Don Luis' actions were not premeditated. However, the position of transatlantic cultural broker in sixteenth-century North America could be deadly for Native Americans. The fate of Squanto, another Indian-European ally, may be instructive to this interpretation. The great success of the Plymouth Settlement in Massachusetts was due in large part to the Pilgrims' relationship with Squanto. Despite surviving several transatlantic crossings, Squanto died very suddenly in Massachusetts. Historical accounts suggest that Squanto was probably poisoned by fellow Indians who feared his close relationship with the English (Vaughan 75). By killing the Jesuits, Don Luis may have proved his loyalty to his tribe and avoided any assassination attempts on his own life (Kupperman 154, Gradie 109). From such a reading, assuming Don Luis did make a good faith, if brief, effort to integrate the Jesuits into Indian life, a series of cultural faux pas by the Spanish precipitated Don Luis' decision not only to leave their culture but also to order their murder.

The first point of cultural confusion regarded resurrection. In Father Quirós' letter of 1570, he joyfully recounts how the Indians, upon seeing Don Luis for the first time in ten years, believed that Don Luis had risen from the dead. No doubt this event suggested to the Jesuit missionaries that the Indians were blessed with an innate knowledge of Christianity, particularly its core belief in the resurrection of Christ. This belief is refuted by a contemporary account from the nearby Plymouth Settlement that suggests the Indians' idea of resurrection was rooted more deeply in indigenous religion or customs than Catholic articles of faith. Specifically, John Winslow, the English governor of Plymouth, wrote of an unexpected situation that arose after he had asked an Indian chief, Massasoit, for protection on a journey through Massasoit's

lands. The chief agreed to ensure Winslow's safety with bodyguards, but he also sent an emissary ahead of the Englishman's group to tell Winslow's family and others in Plymouth Settlement that Winslow had been murdered while traveling. After Winslow arrived home safely the next day, much to the relief of the colonists, he wrote to Chief Massasoit for an explanation of the false message. Massasoit explained the Indian tradition of pretending that travelers had died so their homecoming would be that much more spectacular (Kupperman 1980, 184). Perhaps the Indians' assertion that Don Luis, and later the Jesuits, were spirits returned from the dead was a similar performance of reconnection and reconciliation with travelers rather than the Indians' profession of a Catholic belief.

A second point of cultural confusion in the narratives comes from what the Spanish writers uniformly describe as Don Luis' abandonment of the Jesuits to live in a place far away, thereby intentionally putting the Jesuits at risk and interfering with their plan to convert the Powhatans. The historian Charlotte Gradie suggests, however, that the Jesuits' own relatively remote location mirrored the traditions of Powhatan priestly behavior. Powhatan priests lived far from Indian settlements and demanded gifts to support their lifestyle in exchange for religious services. In fact, the Jesuits' isolation, Gradie explains, may have made the Powhatan priests perceive them as dangerous rivals who had to be killed (170).

The Jesuits' trade policy was a third example of cultural confusion. As the anthropologist Seth Mallios discusses in his 2006 book, the missionaries' willingness to trade for goods rather than live off the gifts of their faithful converts may have made them religiously suspect. More importantly, according to later English accounts at Jamestown, the Powhatans assigned special spiritual meaning to Old World goods. The metal objects that the Jesuits traded with other tribes had spiritually significant value to the Powhatans, as Karen Ordahl Kupperman's study of the English and Indians at Jamestown suggests. John Smith bragged, for example, of a particularly clever trade he had made exchanging many bushels of corn for cheap blue beads. What John Smith did not know, however, was that the Powhatans apported tremendous spiritual power to the beads, making the trade highly desirable for the Indians as well as the English (Kupperman 2000, 174-75). By giving objects sacred to the Powhatan to other tribes, the Jesuits failed as spiritual leaders; the lack of cultural cooperation led, in Mallios's analysis, directly to the Jesuits' downfall.

The Jesuits do not grant any form of agency to the Powhatans in their writings other than the ability to be evil. Each Jesuit author repeats the litany of Don Luis' obedient nature and Spanish education and the other Indians' sincere desire to convert to Catholicism, without acknowledging, or perhaps even considering, Don Luis' Powhatan education and religion. Yet as Gradie notes, Don Luis must have noticed as an Indian in Mexico City the poor treatment that even Indians of the indigenous aristocracy received under Spanish rule (167). The Hispanic disdain for indigenous influence on imperial planning is underscored by Menéndez's final declaration regarding the possibilities of colonizing the Chesapeake Bay. He favored ethnic

cleansing of the Chesapeake Bay; otherwise, he thought, colonization would not succeed (Weber 73). The Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, writing in his book, *The Florida of the Inca*, originally published in Lisbon in 1605, speculates that Don Luis had met other American Indians in Spain whose tribes had been decimated by the Spaniards, and promised to help the Jesuits only as a ruse to return to his homeland (Varner 640-43). Brickhouse posits that the Inca Garcilaso's story also proposes a sinister motive to explain Don Luis' actions as "an act not of volatile barbarity but of premediated and, perhaps, more crucially, *prearticulated* revenge" for Spanish attacks on indigenous communities in North America (27).

While it is easy to assume, reading the Spanish accounts of Ajacán, that the Jesuits' refusal to understand or even acknowledge indigenous points of view at odds with their own caused the breakdown of relations between the two groups and soon thereafter Spain's withdrawal from attempts to outmaneuver other colonial powers, particularly the English, to control the Chesapeake Bay, such an interpretation would be simplistic because it ignores a confluence of events in Spanish viceregal history that followed on the heels of the murder of the Jesuits at Ajacán and indubitably impeded further Spanish settlement in the area. In 1574, the *Adelantado* (provincial military governor) in charge of Spanish settlement of Florida and a strong advocate for North American exploration, Pedro Menéndez de Avilés, died and was not replaced (Weber 75). As a result, Spanish colonization efforts in La Florida ceased completely after the 1586 raids by Sir Francis Drake on Spanish possessions in the Caribbean. Spanish leaders shifted their focus away from continued expansion and expenditures to conquer hostile, potentially costly land in the north toward protecting the highly profitable viceroyalties that they already controlled in the Caribbean and South America (Hoffman 40). Don Luis' story, therefore takes on great importance in Spanish foreign policy, because his story of Ajacán served as a great discouragement for further colonizations efforts of northern lands.

The story of Ajacán is a story told by the Powhatans, recorded in the Jesuit letters. Don Luis and his nation victoriously transmitted their opposition to colonization through the murder of a relatively small number of Jesuit missionaries, galvanized the deed with modest but effective follow up ploys against encroaching Spanish sailors, and immortalized their accomplishments using a carefully engineered oral history, employing as their unwitting mouthpiece a young Spanish survivor who gave voice, heard still today, to their determined ability to keep the Spanish empire out of the Chesapeake Bay.

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## Appendix I

*Vida del Padre Francisco de Borja, Tercer General de la Compañía de Jesús  
(por Pedro de Ribadeneyra, S.J.)<sup>3</sup>*

Mas ni a sus compañeros, ni a los otros sus Hermanos, que quedavan en Europa, no los espantó, ni atemorizó esta muerte del Padre Pedro Martínez; antes los animó más, entendiendo que podían más fácilmente alcançar en la Florida lo que deseavan, que era morir por Christo. Y assí el año de mill y 568 embió el P. Francisco, para seguir la empresa començada, onze de la Compañía, de los quales iba por superior el P. Juan Baptista de Segura; y se avían de juntar con el P. Rogel, y el Hermano Francisco de Villarreal, compañeros del Padre P. Martínez, los quales, después de su muerte, se retiraron al pueblo de la Habana, y avían ya buelto a la Florida, para donde partieron de S. Lúcar los onze Padres y Hermanos a los 13 de março deste año de 1568. Iva con ellos un cacique o señor principal de la mesma tierra de la florida, el qual avía traído della / el adelantado Pero [*sic*] Meléndez de Avilés a España, y aviendo sido enseñado en las cosas de nuestra sancta religión, recibió con grandíssimas muestras de contento el agua del sancto Baptismo y se llamó don Luis. Porque se juzgó que, por ser plático de aquella tierra, y hombre principal, y de muchos deudos, podría ayudar a los nuestros en la conversión de sus vasallos y amigos, como él lo prometía.

Llegados a la Florida, el P. Juan Baptista de Segura y otros siete compañeros (que los demás quedaron en la Habana), se entraron animosamente la tierra adentro, guiados del don Luis, sin consentir que ningún soldado español los acompañasse, aunque muchos se le ofrecieron. Llevaron sus ornamentos, y el recaudo necessario para dezir missa, y algunos libros para su devoción. Passaron grandes desiertos y pantanos de agua, de que ay mucha abundancia en aquella tierra. Faltóles presto el mantenimiento, y huvieron de sustentarse con las yerbas que hallavan por los campos y con el agua que bevían de los charcos. Arribaron a la tierra de don Luis, que estava bien apartada de la mar y de todo humano / abrigo, y habitada de salvajes desnudos. Avisóles don Luis que le aguardasen en un lugar medio despoblado y él se fue a otro donde estava su gente, cinco leguas más adelante. Y como huviessen los B. Padres esperádole seis días más de los que estava concertados, embió el Padre Baptista de Segura un Padre y un Hermano para saber cómo no venía, y si quería que ellos fuessen donde él estava. En llegando (o porque el don Luis avía ya apostatado y buelto a sus idolatrías y se hallava confuso; o porque ya tenía urdida y tramada la maldad), dio con sus deudos y amigos sobre los dichos Padres y Hermanos y quitáronles las vidas. Y al alva del día siguiente dieron sobre los demás, y sin hablarles palabras, yendo don Luis por capitán y guía, hallándolos a todos seis puestos de rodillas, esperando con devoción y alegría la muerte, se la dieron. Y luego les desnudaron de sus vestiduras, y

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<sup>3</sup> Lewis & Loomie 143-44. Reprinted with the permission of the Virginia Historical Society.

robaron los ornamentos y adereços del altar, y se los vistieron, y las ropas de los muertos, y bailaron en su borrachera. Tres dellos fueron a abrir una arquilla de los Padres, pensando hallar dentro alguna gran riqueza; y halláranla, si la supieran conozer, porque dentro de la arquilla estava un libro de / la divina Scriptura y misal, y libros devotos, rosarios, imágenes, silicios y disciplinas, y un devoto crucifixo, al qual se pusieron a mirar muy atentamente, y mirándolo, se cayeron súbitamente muertos. Los compañeros destos tres que estavan a la mira, quedaron tan escandalizados y atónitos de lo que vieron que, sin tocar cosa de las que tenían delante, se fueron cada uno por su parte.

Todo esto vio y notó un mancebo español<sup>4</sup> que los Padres llevavan consigo; al qual, por ser muchacho, y por saber que no iva a predicarles y quitarles la adoración de sus ídolos, le dexaron de matar; y estuvo entre ellos captivo algunos años, hasta que el Señor le libró de tan bárbara y fiera nación y contó lo que queda referido. Los que allí murieron por la propagación de nuestra sancta fee fueron el P. Juan Baptista de Segura, natural de Toledo, que por sus grandes virtudes y vida religiosa avía sido en España muy amada [*sic*] del P. Francisco, el P. Luis de Quirós y los Hermanos Gabriel Gómez, Çavallos, Juan Baptista Méndez, Pedro de Linares, Cristóbal Redondo, Gabriel de Solís. He puesto aquí sus nombres para que quede la memoria destos dichos Religiosos, pues por el zelo de las almas derramaron su sangre con tanta / constancia y alegría.

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<sup>4</sup> Lewis & Loomie record a marginal note to this final paragraph, inserted by Bartolomé Martínez: “Este mancebo se dezia Alonso de Olmos, y no se halló al martirio, como él contó” (147, 8n). Bartolomé Martínez, the Spanish functionary who wrote his own relation of the events at Ajacán, transcribed this copy of Ribadeneyra’s 1592-94 edition of *Vida del Padre Francisco de Borja* and added the marginal note about Alonso. Lewis & Loomie report that the autograph copy may be found in the Society of Jesus’ Archivio del Gesù (Fondo Gesuitico), Rome, Vocationes ad Societatum, N. 2.