



BORDERS IN GLOBALIZATION BOOKS

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HISTORY

AND

NORTH AMERICAN

BORDERLANDS:

INSIGHTS AND APPROACHES

edited by

Randy W. Widdis



University
of Victoria



BORDERS IN
GLOBALIZATION

Published by the University of Victoria

BIG_Books Series, # 3

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Published by the University of Victoria

HISTORY AND NORTH AMERICAN BORDERLANDS: INSIGHTS AND APPROACHES

Edited by: Randy W. Widdis

BIG_Books series, # 3

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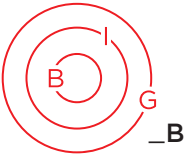
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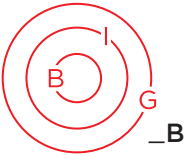
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Foreword

Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly

Borders in Globalization is a multi-disciplinary and international research program, funded through two SSHRC Partnership Grants and multiple European Union Jean Monnet grants. Collectively, in Canada and 15 different countries, we collected data on borders since 2012. Our original research focus was to challenge the well-established conception that borders are primarily sovereign territorial boundaries that emerge out of international treaties. The research program addressed fundamental *how*, *why*, and *what* questions about borders. We provided important knowledge contributions to a globalizing world that increasingly scrutinized movement everywhere, not just at the sovereign boundary line of states. Goods seemed to travel more easily than people; indeed the regulation of human mobility across borders is fraught and highly contentious, with thousands dying in transit yearly.

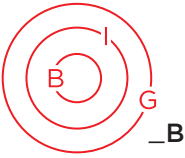
The BIG team studied border *history, culture, governance, mobility, security, and environmental sustainability*. As illustrated by this book, and several other books published by BIG_Books and the University of Ottawa Press series on Borders in Globalization, we approach these questions from the perspective of territories, regions, and states, with hope to collect evidence that there were multiple challenges to the “territorial trap” assumption. We found that state border policies straddled their sovereign boundary lines; that networked policies overlapped many different jurisdictional scales, including but not exclusively that of the sovereign territories of other states. Our second hypothesis, that contemporary borders were processes that in many instances were fundamentally “a-territorial”, was also confirmed when we found that bordering processes were not uniquely territorial, but, rather, fundamentally linked to movements and functions across the world. We discovered that bordering policies increasingly *disregarded* the territorial limits of states, sometimes implementing borders thousands of kilometers away from their international boundary line.

We showed that the borders of globalization were not always contiguous or territorial. The primary reason for this paradigmatic transformation is that states that had the policy capacity to do so, were implementing border crossings *at the source* of movement. These new local and global border 'markers' appear in regulatory systems and production chains organizing the mobility of trade flows and humans. For instance, states and private sector actors are implementing data collection policies allowing for the pre-clearance of global trade flows and travel; individuals and objects are cleared by authorities of their place of destination prior to leaving their place of origin. Contrary to traditional territorial bordering, *a-territorial bordering obeys a fundamentally different logic*: a logic primarily concerned with functional belonging, and driven by the development of mechanisms based on trust. This finding points towards new yet understudied phenomena that continue to transform borders in the 21st century.

Here, historical geographer Randy Widdis, with David Atkinson, Yukari Takai, Marcela Terrazas y Basante, Ana Lilia Nieto Camacho, and Michel Hogue, explore and document relationships across the Canada United States borderlands. Three organizing themes serve their work: first they investigate how borderland individuals, groups, and communities mediate and adapt to uneven relations and interdependencies, and forces of de- and re-territorialization. Second, they further research how the analytical lens of 'sovereignty' persists in those borderland relationships specifically under globalization, imperialism, and colonialism; they discover that sovereignties persist under various forms across those various groups. Third, they focus on the intersectionality of settler and indigenous cultures in borderlands; their collective findings illustrate the spatial adaptability of borderland communities, and how indigenous communities continue to shape cross-border networks of trade. Collectively, through their overarching historical geography lens, they question the permanency of borders as illustrated by the 'territorial trap' analogy and point to the agency of cross-border communities, in particular of indigenous communities and their sovereignties.

All works by Borders in Globalization are available through our website <https://biglobalization.org>.

Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, BIG program lead



Chapter 1

Introduction

Randy W. Widdis

Under current dialectical conditions of globalization and increased demands for security, borders are no longer just symbols of sovereignty and national histories; they are evolving into new forms and as such are taking on new functions. Yet while borders continue to exist and are arguably more fluid and dynamic than ever before, this does not mean that borders prior to the current phase of globalization (1945 onwards) were relatively static and stable. What is constant is the fact that borders are always in a state of becoming and, in this context, we need to address the relationship that exists between borderland evolution and the changing forces of globalization.

Set against this background of dynamic change, the Historical Theme component of the Borders in Globalization project operated from the basic principle that while history is 'messy', it is, as many theorists have argued, necessary in any consideration of borders and borderlands, including those shared by Canada and the United States. Borderlands history, which is an amalgam of two or more histories, is a study of entanglements that look beyond political boundaries and is more attuned to the contingent nature of nation-states and regions. The most important contribution of the borderlands concept to an understanding of the history of Canadian-American relations is that it returns the symbol of the border to the fact of place. In other words, borders must be viewed in relation to the borderlands in which they are situated.

Like borders, borderlands must be situated in their temporal and geographical contexts in order to investigate the relations

between territory, identity, and sovereignty. Throughout modern history, the nation-state has been re-oriented to meet the needs of capitalism, and borders and borderlands continue to play an important role in this regard. As borderlands change, so does their capacity to reterritorialize and rescale place and identity. Borderlands can expand to become significant regions and narrow to become not much more than lines, depending on historical circumstances. Global shifts in imperial power, technological revolutions, and social transformations, as well as national and continental expansion, all play significant roles.

With this basic framing argument in mind, the historical researchers in the BIG project addressed a number of topics related to the evolution of the Canadian–American borderlands and various Indigenous and immigrant borderlands that have emerged over time in North American history. This research was directed by three broad clusters of strategic importance that underlay the themes chosen for investigation. The first involved the idea that different individuals, groups, communities, and regions were, and are, placed in very distinct ways in relation to the cross-border flows and interconnections that shape the evolution of borderlands. In this regard, attention was directed towards those transformations in dependencies, uneven relations, and political economies that accompanied changes in forces of de- and re-territorialization.

The second strategic cluster concerned the widely held notion that sovereignty and its associated geopolitical units such as the state, the region, and the community have withered away under globalization. History has shown that whatever the loss of autonomy experienced under different stages of globalization, colonialism, and imperialism, sovereignty has continued to exist in various forms among different groups—Native, non-Native, and immigrant alike—in different borderland regions. The final cluster recognized that the historical study of different borderlands—Canadian–American and Indigenous—is informed by consideration of the intersection of borders and cultures at different scales. Theorizations of production of culture as production of space have formed the basis for addressing a variety of issues including race, gender, nation, nature, culture, and borderlands. Borderlands are transnational social, cultural, and geographic spaces where local histories; international capital; local, regional, national, and global interconnections; and transnational agency come together in unique ways. This uniqueness is expressed in the different





ways that intersections of culture, identity, and region have evolved.

With these arguments in mind, and recognizing that we had to be selective for this modest book project, researchers focused on three broad themes—Indigeneity, sovereignty, and flows—that were different and yet somewhat interrelated; were especially relevant to North America, particularly Canada and the United States, and yet were inherently universal in their focus; and incorporated considerations of place, space, territory, imperialism, colonialism, sovereignty, globalization, and power. While this collection includes only a portion of the research undertaken by the contributors, it nevertheless presents findings, insights, and approaches that will enlighten those interested in borderlands history.

Following this introductory chapter, historical geographer Randy Widdis presents a historical summary and a critical discussion of Indigenous peoples in the borderlands of Canada and the United States, beginning with an overview of Native societies prior to European contact and then reviewing the transitions taking place between the “middle grounds” of the early fur trade period. This is followed by a discussion of the “spaces of dispossession” and “geographies of exclusion” of the settler period, when exploitation and suppression of Natives and Métis was the practice adopted by governments on both sides of the border. It concludes with a brief overview of current cross-border connections among Natives within the Canadian–American borderlands. In the essay, Widdis argues that borders are historically contingent. He also maintains that because they evolve through processes of border-making or bordering, the meanings connected to borders are constantly changing along with political, economic, and social developments taking place both externally between and internally within states. He also contends that border enforcement challenges Indigenous geographies which are based on motion, fluidity, and adaptation to changes that occur in the natural world. Widdis concludes that for all Native peoples, the 1794 Jay Treaty is crucial because it recognizes rights of passage across the border and as such sanctions Indigenous geographies that are not circumscribed by the conventional European concepts of territory and sovereignty. How this agreement is deciphered and applied by different parties will determine the future evolution of Indigenous borderlands and the re-establishment of Indigenous

conceptions of sovereignty that, in many cases, transcend the Canada–United States border.

In the third chapter, historian David Atkinson analyzes the historical enactment of sovereignty in a borderland context. Recent scholarship in a wide range of subfields has begun to historicize sovereignty's legal, political, social, diplomatic, and economic dimensions. Borderlands offer an especially useful laboratory for understanding how sovereignty was historically constituted, enforced, and contested. By focusing on the contentious question of Asian migration in the US–Canada Pacific region, Atkinson explores how American, British, Canadian, Japanese, and Chinese authorities wrangled over the appropriate extent of their sovereign claims in the region. At the same time, he illustrates how those sovereign claims were also mediated by local migrants, labourers, business owners, and municipal leaders. These perspectives, he maintains, will provide an empirical framework for illustrating how competing claims of sovereignty—local, colonial, national, imperial, transnational, and international—are negotiated and disputed in borderland spaces.

In her examination of Japanese immigrant hotels, labour contractors, and ocean-bound borderlands from the 1880s to the 1910s, historian Yukari Takai sheds new light on the special role that Hawai'i played in trans-Pacific and transcontinental Japanese migration. Existing historical literature has tended to brush past the context in which Hawai'i emerged as a political fault line and transmigration route between Japan and North America. In this essay, Takai probes into the roles of two groups of the hitherto understudied parties of migration. They are: 1) Japanese immigrant hotels in Honolulu, and 2) labour contracting companies in Vancouver, Seattle, and San Francisco, both of which were fundamental to propelling the out-migration of Japanese immigrant workers from the sugar plantations to continental destinations. In doing so, Takai illuminates the emergence and transformation of Hawai'i as an ocean-bound borderland for the movement of tens of thousands of Japanese labourers from Japan to the Pacific North American West.

In the penultimate chapter, historians Ana Lilia Nieto Camacho, Marcela Terrazas y Basante, and Michel Hogue compare the roles that Apaches and Comanches (along with Mexican and American nationals) played in the traffic of livestock





across the Mexico–US border with those that Métis and First Nations played in shaping the fur and provisions trade on the northeastern Plains. The essay demonstrates that despite their many differences, the intensity of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous actors and the economic and social networks they created across international boundaries were equally pivotal in shaping these different borderlands. Their work explores the heuristic and comparative value of research that shows how settler colonialism operated in both similar and different ways across varying borderlands. By forcing us to ask new questions and placing analyses in new contexts, the comparative approach is valuable to the study of borderlands history.

The final chapter by Randy Widdis critically examines how certain parties have usurped the concept of “Atlantica” and the idea of a “Greater New England” to support their case for greater economic integration of Atlantic Canada and New England. It argues that while the linkages between Atlantic Canada and New England are substantial, history shows us that the Atlantic or Northeastern borderland is not an amorphous region as intimated by these groups, suggesting that policy-makers would be well advised to take this into consideration. The piece also demonstrates that while history provides essential context and perspective to policy-making, it can also be exploited by those who wish to further their own causes.



Chapter 2

Indigenous Borderlands, Borders, and Territories: An Overview

Randy W. Widdis

Over the last four decades or so, borderlands history has gained considerable ground as an acceptable field of study.¹ Indeed, in their lead essay in a *Journal of American*

- 1 In his 1932 presidential address to the American Historical Association entitled "The Epic of Greater America", Herbert Bolton encouraged scholars to move beyond nation-centered narratives to look for historical parallels existing among different regions and countries of the Western Hemisphere, including the United States. This lecture, along with his earlier work on the Spanish borderlands, laid the foundation for what has been termed the borderlands approach to history. Few historians, however, dared to move beyond national borders and, consequently, the Boltonian school experienced low enrollments for decades. Bolton was unable to develop a "borderlands" theory that could challenge the paradigmatic "frontier thesis" of Frederick Jackson Turner. Eventually, however, developments occurred that brought the concept of borderlands back into the historiographic conversation. Foremost was the significant challenge of Turner spearheaded by the so-called "new Western historians" who criticized the frontier thesis on several grounds, including its anti-urbanism, its neglect of non-white peoples who played such an important role in the settlement of the American West, its disregard of the connections that linked this region with a global economy, and its overly heroic interpretation that ignores the cultural legacy of colonial subjugation. While a diverse group, the new Western historians, with just a few exceptions (e.g., William Cronon), encouraged historians to abandon Turner and look



History special issue on borderlands history, Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett claim that borderlands and transnationalism are at the forefront of much historical research currently undertaken, and that borderlands history has moved “from the margins to the mainstream”.² Nevertheless, they argue that while many recognize the importance of borderlands, the field remains characterized by unsettled centrist paradigms and continues to preserve long-established distinctions between imperial and national histories, immigrant and Indigenous subjects, and state

elsewhere for conceptual and theoretical guidance. They pointed scholars towards postcolonial theory which accounts for the cultural legacy of colonial rule and associated issues of identity, gender, race, racism, and ethnicity. Although the new Western historians were criticized by those defending the frontier concept, their arguments had significant impact. While many American historians continued to adhere to the dominant paradigm, others began to search for and consider new ideas and methods. In addition to postcolonial theory, the transnational approach—which acknowledges the flows and networks of peoples, goods, ideas, capital, and institutions that transcend politically defined spaces—became more prominent. See: Frederick Jackson Turner, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History”, *Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1893* (Chicago: American Historical Association, 1893), 199–227; Herbert Bolton, *The Spanish Borderlands: a Chronicle of Old Florida and the Southwest* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1921); “The Epic of Greater America”, *The American Historical Review* 38, no. 3 (1933): 448–474; Donald Worster, *Dust Bowl: The Southern Plains in the 1930s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979); Richard White, *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change: The Shaping of Island County, Washington* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1980); Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Pantheon, 1985); Patricia Limerick, *The Legacy of Conquest: The Unbroken Past of the American West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1987); Donald Worster, “New West, True West: Interpreting the Region’s History”, *Western Historical Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1987): 141–156; William Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1991); Patricia Limerick, “What on Earth is the New Western History?” in Patricia Limerick, Clyde A. Milner II, and Charles Rankin, eds., *Trails: Toward a New Western History* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1991); Richard White, *It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own”: A History of the American West* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991).

- 2 Pekka Hämäläinen and Samuel Truett, “On Borderlands”, *The Journal of American History* 92, no. 2 (2011): 338–361.

and nonstate realms.³ Furthermore, even with the growing popularity of borderlands research, American historians continue to work primarily on topics relevant within the borders of their own nation-states.⁴ The same could be said for their counterparts in Canada.⁵

There are many reasons why historians in both the United States and Canada continue to be limited by borders. Perhaps most prominent is the fact that *exceptionalism* and *nationalism* still permeate the thinking of American and Canadian historians respectively.⁶ Among several obstacles to transnational history in Canada, Henry Yu, Karen Dubinsky, and Adele Perry mention that "national and continental frames still define the bulk of hirings in history departments ... and graduate students and junior scholars are understandably cautious about defining their expertise in different terms".⁷ The same might be said for the academic hiring scene in the United States, although evidence shows that many history departments have allowed room for transnational scholarship.

While transnational history and borderlands approaches have become more mainstream in both countries, more so in

3 *Ibid.*, 339.

4 Marcus Gräser, "World History in a Nation-State: The Transnational Disposition in Historical Writing in the United States", *The Journal of American History* 95, no. 4 (2009): 1038–1052.

5 Henry Yu, Karen Dubinsky, and Adele Perry, "Introduction", in Henry Yu, Karen Dubinsky, and Adele Perry, eds., *Within and Without the Nation: Canadian History as Transnational History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 3–24.

6 For a detailed explanation of exceptionalism, see: Seymour Martin Lipset, *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997). The nationalist exegesis, so dominant in Canadian history, is discussed in Yu, Dubinsky, and Perry, "Introduction". Among Canadian historical geographers, the most influential scholar adhering to this perspective is R. Colebrook Harris. See: R. Colebrook Harris, *Newsletter for Canadian Historical Geographers* 5 (1990): 1; "The Canadian Archipelago and the Borderlands Thesis", *Association of American Geographers Annual Meeting Program and Abstracts* (Washington, DC: American Association of Geographers, 1990); *The Reluctant Land: Society, Space, and Environment before Confederation* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2008).

7 Yu, Dubinsky, and Perry, "Introduction", 11.



America than Canada, the southern border the US shares with Mexico has garnered considerably more attention among American historians than the northern border with Canada. Even though many scholars have reflected on the nature of cross-border relationships between Canada and the US, there exists, as Donald Worster emphasizes, “no real school of northern borderlands history, no Herbert Bolton or John Francis Bannon for these parts”.⁸ The Canadian–American borderland does not present as dramatic a paradox as the Mexican–American borderland, with the latter’s first-world-meets-third-world character. Indeed, it is not too much of an exaggeration to say that, generally, most Americans see little difference between the US and Canada, though this attitude has changed somewhat since 9/11. Further complicating matters is the significant geographical variation that separates the regions along this border and the historically strong cross-border links that, in many cases, run counter to east–west connections. Finally, the fact that there is no uniform borderland society has no doubt discouraged the study of this borderland.

On the other hand, despite the nationalist exegesis that is still prominent in Canada, a growing number of Canadian historians have addressed Canadian–American relations from a borderlands perspective, although this body of literature still pales compared to the work done by Americans and Mexicans on the US–Mexico border.⁹ This chapter adds to

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- 8 Donald Worster, *Under Western Skies: Nature and History in the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 6.
 - 9 The original foray into borderlands scholarship was spearheaded by Lauren McKinsey and Victor Konrad who issued a bold challenge to scholars on both sides of the border to focus attention on trans-border issues and work towards developing a research methodology based on the borderlands approach. See: Lauren McKinsey and Victor Konrad, *Borderland Reflections: The United States and Canada*, Borderlands Monograph Series # 1 (Orono: Canadian-American Center, University of Maine, 1989). Some examples of Canadian borderlands history produced in the last two decades include: Beth LaDow, *The Medicine Line: Life and Death on a North American Borderland* (New York: Routledge, 2001); John Findlay and Kenneth Coates, eds., *Parallel Destinies: Canadian-American Relations West of the Rockies*, The Emil and Kathleen Sick Lecture-Book Series in Western History and Biography (Seattle and Montréal: University of Washington Press and McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2002); Jack Little,

this literature by providing a historical overview of Indigenous peoples inhabiting the borderlands of Canada and the United States.¹⁰ The survey ranges widely, covering pre-contact and modern periods and traversing several borderland regions.¹¹ My approach is influenced by postcolonial theory which emphasizes the economic, cultural, and political legacies of colonialism. It also seeks to reconsider the history and agency of people subordinated under imperialism. In the North American context, borderland historians employing a postcolonial perspective often direct their attention towards the struggles of Indigenous peoples. Settler colonialism, which includes various kinds of oppression and repression by overt (e.g., warfare, genocide) and covert (e.g., government policy) means, resulted in the dispossession of Indigenous peoples' lands, resources, and cultures.¹²

Borderland Religion: The Emergence of an English-Canadian Identity, 1792–1852 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); John Bukowczyk et al., *Permeable Border: The Great Lakes Basin as Transnational Region, 1650–1990* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2005); Stephen Hornsby and John Reid, eds., *New England and the Maritime Provinces: Connections and Comparisons* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005); Sheila McManus, *The Line which Separates: Race, Gender and the Making of the Alberta-Montana Borderlands* (Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press, 2005); David McCrady, *Living With Strangers: The Nineteenth-Century Sioux and the Canadian–American Borderlands* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015); Benjamin Hoy, *A Line of Blood and Dirt: Creating the Canada–United States Border across Indigenous Lands* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021).

- 10 The terms Indigenous, Aboriginal, Native, First Nations, First Peoples and Native Americans are used interchangeably in the context of official classifications in Canada and the United States. The first three words apply in a generic fashion while First Nations is now considered to be a more politically correct term than Indian in Canada. While Indian or American Indian is still preferred by many Aboriginal people in the United States, I am sensitive to the fact that many find these terms offensive and so I will use the phrase Native American. The words Indian and American Indians will only be used when quoted from a published source.
- 11 Because of space constraints, the coverage is deliberately selective and therefore far from complete.
- 12 The foundation for settler colonialism as an academic field was established by Patrick Wolfe who argues that settler colonialism



Pre-Contact Period

Nation-states are organized through the imposition and operation of borders, manifested as geopolitical lines which are thereby used to establish the inside/outside dichotomy that produces sovereign authority.¹³ Pre-contact Native societies held a different conception of borders. While European b/ordering was based on the abstract notion of land as territory,¹⁴ Indigenous b/ordering was based on connections to places. They used language, seasonal travel, kinship ties, trade networks, and landscape features to define limits to sovereignty. But the borders that defined traditional Native places/spaces were never geopolitical lines; they were conceptions about flows and changes in the natural environment. The boundaries that mattered for Native peoples were those that mediated relationships between groups and their environments within the lands, water bodies, or

is a system that perpetuates the elimination of Native peoples as a precondition for expropriation of lands and resources. It is a system that is founded on the binary division between a presumed superior, progressive and universal European culture on the one hand, and inferior Indigenous societies on the other hand. While his and others' contributions are notably praised, there are some Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars who feel much of the work conducted in the field underestimates the agency and resistance of Indigenous peoples. For example, Alissa Macoun and Elizabeth Strakosch argue that settler colonial studies is "primarily a settler framework" for thinking about colonial relations and express concern that there is "an underlying 'colonial fatalism' which posits a structural inevitability to settler colonial relations" that removes individual agency from the research equation. See: Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native", *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409; Alissa Macoun and Elizabeth Strakosch, "The Ethical Demands of Settler Colonial Theory", *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 2 (2013): 427, 435.

- 13 John Agnew, "The territorial trap: The geographical assumptions of international relations theory", *Review of International Political Economy* 1, no. 1 (1994): 53–80.
- 14 B/ordering, a concept developed by Henk Van Houtum and Ton Van Naerssen, refers to the ways states, regions and cities border and apply order to space. See: Henk Van Houtum and Ton Van Naerssen, "Bordering, Ordering and Othering", *Tijdschrift voor economische en sociale geografie* 93, no. 2 (2002): 125–136; Henk van Houtum, Olivier Kramsch, and Wolfgang Zierhofer, eds., *B/ordering Space* (London: Routledge, 2005).

territories they traditionally occupied. Territory and associated self-identification varied in size and scale. For some, it was the village or tribe with which they identified; for others, it was the larger nation or confederacy.¹⁵ For many groups, thresholds that facilitated the human–environment relationship were established. These boundaries reinforced sustainability, and, if crossed, resulted in imbalances that threatened the existence of both the group and the environment. For example, as Lissa Wadewitz has demonstrated, Native peoples who fished the Salish Sea (Puget Sound, the Strait of Georgia, and the Strait of Juan de Fuca) used social and cultural borders to sustainably administer the salmon fishing resource.¹⁶

Juliana Barr offers an excellent interpretation of Indigenous borders in her discussion of Native American borders of the southwestern United States. She argues:

... to illuminate the material borders of Indian power—explicitly the manifestation of Indian sovereignty on the land—it is important to know how Indians understood territory and boundaries, how they extended power over geographic space, and how their practices of claiming, marking, and understanding territory differed not only from Europeans' but also from each other's ... For many, bounded landscapes defined their locales, and people of only one group used a specific spatial domain. For others, territorial sharing proved the customary practice, even as they maintained distinct cultures, languages, and sociopolitical structures. In these shared lands, defending social and economic boundaries was the essence of territorial integrity, and groups respected existing borders as they moved through the landscape.¹⁷

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- 15 Amy St. John and Neal Ferris, "Unravelling identities on archaeological borderlands: Late Woodland Western Basin and Ontario Iroquoian Traditions in the Lower Great Lakes region", *The Canadian Geographer* 63, no. 1 (2019): 47.
 - 16 Lissa Wadewitz, *The Nature of Borders: Salmon, Boundaries, and Bandits on the Salish Sea*, Emil and Kathleen Sick Book Series in Western History and Biography (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012).
 - 17 Juliana Barr, "Geographies of Power: Mapping Indian Borders in the 'Borderlands' of the Early Southwest", *The William and Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (2011): 9–10.



Diverse groups with distinct political economies and social structures living in unique environments exhibited different b/ordering practices. Borderlands evolved as Indigenous homelands coincided in space and sovereignty was defended. While the desire to acquire territory and resources included within is often an important causal factor in warfare, this territorial imperative was not always the driving force behind intertribal conflict during the pre-contact period. Archaeological data suggests that in the Great Plains of North America, warfare developed in response to extreme environmental events and natural disasters that produced shortages in food and other essential resources, which in turn created population/resource imbalance.¹⁸ In the Pacific Northwest, certain groups conducted warfare to achieve geopolitical goals, including expansion of territory and protection of lands.¹⁹ Iroquois warfare in the Great Lakes basin has been linked more to mourning, feuding, and revenge than the drive to expand territory or gain, although some assert that the Iroquois confederacy (Haudenosaunee), an arguably egalitarian society whose tribes united to form a powerful nation, were an imperialist culture.²⁰

As Amy St. John and Neal Ferris explain, different Indigenous groups defined borders in different ways. Identities and associated territorial borders could be expressed through material practices that sometimes clearly separated peoples in space and at other times crossed boundaries between groups that lived differently.²¹ Their work on the pre-contact Late Woodland Iroquoian peoples of the Lower Great Lakes reveals that borders between Indigenous groups in this region during this period were porous and in motion. The interaction of identity, ethnicity, and material culture generated fluid borderlands where Indigenous peoples of distinct yet related ethnicities evolved overlapping identities based on proximity

18 Douglas Bamforth, "Indigenous people, Indigenous violence: precontact warfare on the North American Great Plains", *Man* 29, no. 1 (1994): 95–115.

19 Jeremy Buddenhagen, "Tsemasyaenhl-get: Sixteen Battles in the Military History of the Nine Allied Tsimshian Tribes", MA Thesis, University of Victoria, 2011.

20 St. John and Ferris, "Unravelling identities on archaeological borderlands", 47.

21 *Ibid.*, 53.

and shared resources.²² The borderlands where these peoples resided, they suggest, were places where culture and identity were "negotiated and reconstructed" and where "identities shift[ed] and intersect[ed] depending on context".²³ Although their empirical work focuses on a specific pre-contact group, their arguments apply as well to other Indigenous peoples throughout North America. Their findings, Victor Konrad and Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly suggest, "may lead to a broader and deeper understanding of borders, boundaries, frontiers, borderlands, and borderscapes in an Indigenous era and offer a counterpart to the derived conceptions of bordering in our contemporary world".²⁴

Before European settlers began to colonize North America, Native peoples inhabited all regions and adapted their lifestyles to the environments in which they were located. Some groups were nomadic hunters and gatherers, and others, in more amenable environments, practiced small-scale agriculture and lived in semi-permanent or permanent villages. Still others, particularly those living along bodies of water, resided in fishing camps for parts of the year. In certain regions, such as the aforementioned Salish Sea, tribes were non-existent before contact with Europeans. Groups in this region organized around kinship and language and only "emerged as political entities following treaty negotiations, the establishment of the reserve/reservation systems, and in response to the requirements of subsequent legal actions against the government".²⁵

Indigenous geographies were circumscribed by the routes and passages established by people who inhabited terrestrial and maritime territories. Over time, certain groups began to establish trade and migration routes that brought them into contact with other bands and tribes. For example, in western North America, sophisticated trading networks existed prior to the arrival of Europeans and non-Native North Americans

22 *Ibid.*

23 *Ibid.*, 53–54.

24 Victor Konrad and Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly, "Approaching borders, creating borderland spaces, and exploring the evolving borders between Canada and the United States", *The Canadian Geographer* 63, no. 1 (2019): 7.

25 Bruce Miller, "The 'Really Real' Border and the Divided Salish Community", *BC Studies* 112 (1997): 65.



Contact and Colonization

With colonization, interactions between Europeans and Indigenous peoples varied according to geography and nation. Although France and Britain sought profit through trade and exploitation of resources, they differed in their attitudes towards and relationships with Native peoples. In the context of what would gradually become the Canadian–American borderlands, the French exploited existing intertribal alliances and rivalries to establish trade relationships with the Huron, Montagnais, Algonquins, Saukteaux, Potawatomis, and Choctaws in the middle grounds along the St. Lawrence River, the Great Lakes, and further inland. Indigenous groups trapped and transported furs and served as guides and intermediaries.

Among the first historians to incorporate postcolonial and borderlands perspectives into their work was Richard White. In his book *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815*, White argued that during the colonial period, the Great Lakes Native peoples and the Europeans, primarily the French, occupied what he terms a "middle ground", i.e., a sphere of hybridity and accommodation which was "in-between cultures, peoples, and in between empires and the non-state world of villages".²⁶ In such a setting, made possible by the fur trade

26 Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991), x. Well before the idea of the "middle ground" gained favour among American historians, certain scholars of the Canadian fur trade argued against the traditional view of Native peoples falling into a subordinate and dependent relationship. Arthur Ray shows that Native peoples on the Canadian prairies took advantage of the rivalries between the Europeans before 1763, and between the trading companies after that date, to attain as advantageous a position as possible within the system. Ray also demonstrates that certain Native groups used their position as middlemen within the trade to not only gain an advantage over the fur trade companies but other native groups as well. In a similar vein, Thomas Schilz argues that both Native peoples and Europeans in Canada viewed the fur trade "in purely egocentric terms, believing that they were the exploiters and their business partners the exploited. As such, each cultural group sought to insure its advantages over the other, and both played by rigid rules that all were expected to observe". See: Arthur Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Roles as Trappers, Hunters,*



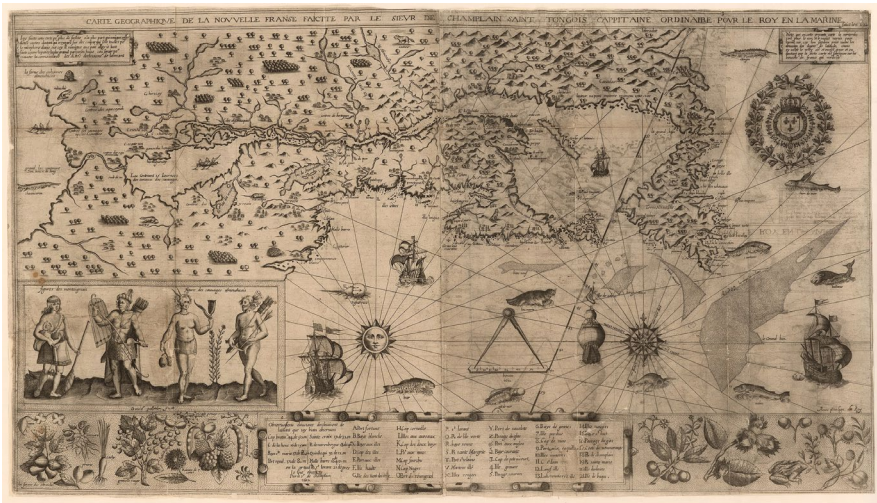


Figure 2.2. Samuel de Champlain Carte géographique de la Nouvelle France, 1612. Note: The *pays d'en haute*, the term the French used for the Great Lakes basin is situated in the left of the map. Source: *Wikimedia*. https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Samuel_de_Champlain_Carte_geographique_de_la_Nouvelle_France.jpgg. Public Domain.

system, economic negotiation and cultural accommodation took place. Native agency played a major role in dictating the evolution of the space-economy even though the system was managed by and catered to the demands of distant metropolises. No Turnerian binaries existed in the *pays d'en haut* (the term Champlain used for the upper Great Lakes); instead, European–Native relations pinned on “the inability of both sides to gain their ends through force” and “the need for people to find a means, other than force, to gain the cooperation and consent of foreigners”²⁷ (Figure 2.2).

As described in the Canadian Museum of History, “the fur trade entailed far more than a simple exchange of commodities: it fostered the interchange of knowledge,

and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660–1870 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); Arthur Ray, “Competition and Conservation in the Early Subarctic Fur Trade”, *Ethnohistory* 25, no. 4 (1978): 347–357; Thomas Schilz, “The Gros Ventres and the Canadian Fur Trade 1754–1831”, *American Indian Quarterly* 12, no. 1 (1988): 41.

²⁷ White, *The Middle Ground*, 52.

technology, and material culture; it underpinned powerful military coalitions; and it gave rise to new cultural forms and identities".²⁸ While commerce created a middle ground, the French did attempt to assimilate Indigenous peoples using methods such as evangelization, but these efforts were largely unsuccessful. The hybrid borderland of the middle ground fundamentally changed Indigenous lives but did not, during this time, threaten their sovereignty. Indigenous territories were well-respected in this fur trade frontier and Native peoples asserted power. The French made no effort to dispossess Native peoples from their territories. "Although France claimed sovereignty over a wide area of the St. Lawrence basin and its hinterland", Cornelius Jaenen states, "the French Crown also recognized that Indigenous peoples were part of independent nations governed by their own laws and customs. They were referred to as allies, not subjects".²⁹

British relations with Indigenous peoples in the American colonies were much more antagonistic. While the British concentrated their fur trade activity in the Canadian Northwest, they did carry on with some trade with Indigenous groups, particularly the Iroquois, in the Great Lakes basin claimed by France.³⁰ But because such activity in this region was limited, there did not exist the same incentives to practice the middle ground diplomacy that the French followed. During this time, the Great Lakes was a region of cultural accommodation,

28 "Economic Activities: Fur Trade", Virtual Museum of New France—*Canadian Museum of History* website. <https://www.historymuseum.ca/virtual-museum-of-new-france/economic-activities/fur-trade/>.

29 Cornelius Jaenen, "Indigenous-French Relations", *The Canadian Encyclopedia* website, August 17, 2015. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/Aboriginal-french-relations>.

30 Before this, the British and the French conducted fur trading with Indigenous peoples in Atlantic Canada and New England (e.g. Mi'kmaq, Maliseet, Innu, Beothuk, Armouchiquois, Penobscot) but over exploitation of the beaver combined with epidemics ravaging the Native populations brought about the severe erosion of the trade in the former and total demise in the latter. Also, the fur trade declined in Québec earlier than it did in what would eventually become Ontario and the Midwest regions. For a more detailed discussion of Indigenous-European relations during the fur trade period in Atlantic Canada and New England, see: Randy Widdis, "The Evolution of the Gulf of St. Lawrence as a Maritime Borderland", *Journal of Historical Geography* 81 (July, 2023): 190–201.





even though underlying power relations and conflicts made this middle ground fragile. The basin was the hinterland of competing empires and served as a gigantic trade zone in which culture became the economic goods of demand. A hybrid Pan-Indian/European fur trade culture developed. The rivalry between English and French interests in connection with the fur trade stimulated Indigenous travel and migration. New goods, weapons, and systems of organization associated with the fur trade transformed Native societies. Europeans borrowed from Natives and Natives borrowed from Europeans. When cultural relationships began to break down, the sides involved created rituals to attenuate stress.

The middle ground of the Native–European frontier produced a transitional space of *encounter* characterized by some degree of cultural hybridity. Here was a space where the local (Indigenous) and the global (European) interacted and produced a new arrangement of culture and power in which Native peoples were anything but subordinate, even though they served as a labour force in a European-designed production system. But once the British entered the scene and, along with the French, moved to establish their territories in the same space, Native groups took on a different role in the fur trade and formulated new relationships with whites and each other. The process of bordering turned a liminal frontier into a contested borderland in which Native groups had to negotiate a path that would best suit their needs. Negotiations included alliances and conflicts which—combined with the impacts of disease, a declining resource base, and changing demands for fur—would eventually result in dependency and marginalization.

During the Seven Years' War, known as the French and Indian War in the United States, the Iroquois aligned with the British against the French and their Algonquin allies. With the British victory in 1760 came the decline of the middle ground as the British preferred force over accommodation, resulting in a loss of favour among many tribes. Also, while the Royal Proclamation of 1763 forbid the private purchase of Indigenous territories, colonial governments still retained the right to alienate such lands within their borders.³¹ In their

31 Anthony Hall, "Royal Proclamation of 1763", *Canadian Encyclopedia* website, August 30, 2019. <https://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.ca/en/article/royal-proclamation-of-1763>.

justification for the dispossession of Native territories, the British relied upon the early paragraphs of John Locke's *Second Treatise* which present the idea that land is not a direct gift of nature, but, like any other commodity, can become the private possession of an individual who labours for it.³² Under the British, a space of *accommodation* transitioned into a space of *contestation*. After the Revolutionary War ended, the United States adopted a similar attitude towards Natives. In rationalizing their territorial claims, Americans redefined "Indian lands as new spaces of empire".³³

Upon the end of the Seven Years' War and the British conquest of Canada, Native groups traditionally allied with the French expressed concern over the issue of sovereignty, even though the Proclamation of 1763 prohibited the private purchase of "Indian" lands.³⁴ It was the first British acknowledgement of the pre-existing rights of Natives to their lands, recognizing them as nations, and is viewed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples alike as setting the stage for subsequent nation-to-nation treaties.³⁵ The Proclamation angered American colonists thirsting for land, and it was not too long before a new boundary—located further westward than the Proclamation line and superseding it—was established. This bordering act opened settlement in the trans-Appalachian region, further pushing Native Americans westward.³⁶

32 Mark Hulliung, *The Social Contract in America: From the Revolution to the Present Age* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007). Paul Corcoran argues that Locke established a defense of Native rights to lands in later paragraphs of the treatise that counters the widely held impression that Lockean theory set forth the ideological prototype of imperial colonialism in the 'vacant lands' of North America. See: Paul Corcoran, "John Locke on the Possession of Land: Native Title vs. the 'Principle' of Vacuum domicilium", Unpublished paper, no date. https://digital.library.adelaide.edu.au/dspace/bitstream/2440/44958/1/hdl_44958.pdf.

33 Philip Deloria, "From Nation to Neighborhood: Land, Policy, Culture, Colonialism, and Empire in US-Indian Relations", in James Cook, Lawrence Glickman, and Michael O'Malley, eds., *The Cultural Turn in US History: Past, Present, and Future* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2008), 353.

34 Ian L. Getty and Antoine S. Lussier, eds., *As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows: A Reader in Canadian Native Studies* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2000), 7.

35 *Ibid.*, xi.

36 George Lewis, *The Indiana Company, 1763–1798: A Study in*





Tribal lands were divided when the international border was formed at the end of the American Revolution. The position of Indigenous peoples within the newly formed British North American–American borderlands was compromised by disease and a massive invasion of settlers south of the border. By 1784, settlers were already pouring into what would become West Virginia and the Ohio country, and most accepted that the frontier right up to the Mississippi was open for settlement. The fact that Native American tribes in this region joined the British in fighting against the colonists because they were fearful of American expansion into their traditional tribal grounds further incited anti-Native American emotions, strengthening the widely held position that Congress should not begin any negotiations that could impede Western settlement. The government was already making such an effort, but the treaties made before and after 1784 were not honoured as settlers, with the backing of the new federal military, trespassed into Native American country and appropriated territory. In this process, some tribes willingly ceded land in exchange for goods or the promise of annuities, while others were less willing to surrender their territories and offered resistance.

Few in power saw Native American tribes as legitimate nations with sovereign claims to territory. In 1784, James Duane, New York state senator and former “Indian Commissioner”, advised the governor of New York not to treat the Haudenosaunee as equals, saying that “I would never suffer the word ‘nation’ or ‘six nations’ or ‘confederates’ or ‘council fire at Onondago’ or any other form which would revive or seem to confirm their former ideas of independence. They should rather be taught that the public opinion of their importance has long since ceased”.³⁷ This sentiment prevailed in spite of the fact that just three years later, Section 114, Article 3 of the Northwest Ordinance promised that Native Americans’ “lands and their property shall never be taken from them without their consent; and in their property, rights, and liberty, they shall never be invaded or disturbed, unless in just and lawful wars authorized by Congress”.³⁸ Despite this particular legislation,

Eighteenth Century Frontier Land Speculation and Business Venture (Glendale: Arthur H. Clark Company, 1941).

37 Quoted in William Washburn, *The Indian in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975), 100.

38 *Transcript of Northwest Ordinance* (1787). www.ourdocuments.gov.

Congress began to pass a series of land ordinances that provided for land surveys, sales of land to individuals, and the institutional foundation for the creation of new states. The previous Proclamation of 1763 was considered null and void after the colonies were granted independence from Great Britain. Over the next few years, ordinances would open the West for white settlement. Collectively, broken treaties, diseases, violence, and policies of social exclusion, assimilation, and territorial expulsion worked to dispossess Native peoples of their lands and dismantle the territorial sovereignty of Indigenous nations.

North of the newly established border, the state of Aboriginal affairs differed significantly. No Lockean justification for the dispossession of Native lands existed in the British colonies. As discussed, the Proclamation of 1763 explicitly stated that all land would be considered Aboriginal until ceded by treaty, that only the Crown could buy land from First Nations, and that settlers could not claim land from Aboriginal occupants unless it was first bought by the Crown and then sold to settlers.³⁹ While the Proclamation established a monopoly over Aboriginal lands by the British Crown, it set the *theoretical* foundation for treaty-making and acknowledged the sovereignty and nationhood of First Nations.

The British in Canada also operated from a much less powerful position in their dealings with Native peoples. From the beginning, First Nations were viewed by the French and then the British—represented primarily by the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC)—as indispensable in their efforts to exploit staple resources. While the HBC and the newly formed North West Company (NWC) out of Montréal dominated the continental fur trade in the late 18th century, they found it necessary to maintain strong relations with Aboriginal groups in those areas where the resource was still plentiful.⁴⁰ Additionally, the British were not yet facing a situation where the pressures of

39 "Royal Proclamation, 1763", *First Nations and Indigenous Studies*, University of British Columbia website. https://Indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/royal_proclamation_1763/.

40 A destructive rivalry, increasing American competition, a decline in fur-bearing animals, government pressure to end the alcohol trade with Native peoples, and decreasing profits led the HBC and the NWC to amalgamate in 1821. See: Harold Innis, "Interrelations between the Fur Trade of Canada and the United States", *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* 20, no. 3 (1933): 329.





non-Native settlement forced them to question and renege on agreements made with Indigenous peoples. The fur trade produced a *colonial* space which fundamentally transformed an earlier *Aboriginal* space, one that varied from the settled agriculturalists of the Great Lakes basin to the nomadic tribes of the Great Plains. Likewise, it created a *capitalist* space configuration where, for a considerable period, though differing from place to place, Indigenous groups exercised a good degree of power in varying types of middle grounds. Yet, despite their relative standing within the system, a trading network spanning the continent oriented Aboriginal space towards a European market.

While the United States was feeling pressure to develop policy, the British North American colonies approached the subject of relations with Natives on an *ad hoc* basis, and it was only later that any kind of coherent policy was created. Timothy Willig contends that it was nearly impossible for the British to establish a single "Indian" policy during the late 18th and early 19th centuries because their relations with Native peoples varied significantly from region to region. Relations in these regions, he argues, were affected by such factors as the local success of the fur trade, Native relations with the United States, geography, the influence of British "Indian" agents, intertribal relations, Native acculturation or cultural revitalization, and constitutional issues of Native sovereignty and legal statuses.⁴¹

Native peoples in the Canadian Shield managed to participate in the European-directed fur trade while continuing to hunt and fish in small, migratory groups. Yet by this point in time, the impact of a diminishing supply of fur-bearing and game animals was starting to be felt. Further west, the Plains Native peoples were only marginally involved with the fur trade, instead focusing on hunting bison; in the Cordillera and along the Pacific Coast, Indigenous groups were fully engaged in the fur trade by 1800, but such activity had not yet significantly transformed Native cultures.⁴²

41 Timothy Willig, *Restoring the Chain of Friendship: British Policy and the Indians of the Great Lakes, 1783-1815* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008).

42 R. Colebrook Harris, "Canada in 1800", in R. Colebrook Harris, ed., *Historical Atlas of Canada: Volume I: From the Beginning to 1800*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 173.

But eventually, Native peoples (e.g., Lakota Sioux, Cree, and Assiniboine) in the Prairies and northern Plains participated more vigorously in the fur trade. Different kinds of "middle grounds" reflecting variable historical and geographical circumstances existed throughout what may be described as a gigantic trade zone. Both Indigenous and fur company territories and borders were rather undefined. Only later—when the international border was established in 1818, the white presence increased, and imperial rivalries became more pronounced—did borderlands emerge. Native peoples continued to move back and forth across the line to trade with those British and American companies that could offer the best deals.⁴³

Another group, the Métis, played an important role in shaping the fur trade in the Plains and Prairies. From the beginning, the Métis engaged in trade and hunting activities with Natives and non-Natives, regardless of location. Descended from voyageurs from Québec and the Great Lakes who worked for Montréal-based fur trade companies and married Native women, the Métis, who had permanent settlements north and south of the border in the Red River valley, mostly the former, were semi-nomadic, traveling as far as necessary in their roles as provisioners for the fur trade and later as hunters in the buffalo robe trade (Figure 2.3).⁴⁴ They were trans-border citizens who took advantage of opportunities presented on both sides of the line, a situation which meant that they could challenge territorial claims when it was to their advantage.

Many of the Native peoples and Métis changed drastically after the mid-19th century. The situation began to deteriorate for parkland and grassland tribes. Missionary activity challenged traditional forms of leadership, while disease and the near extinction of the buffalo had a devastating effect. Increasingly, the 49th parallel proved to be a more effective instrument of control. Earlier in the century, the border was no impediment; bands of Canadian Plains Cree are believed to have occupied present-day Montana on a seasonal basis

43 For a detailed examination of this behaviour, see: McCrady, *Living With Strangers*.

44 Gerhard Ens, "The Border, the Buffalo, and the Métis of Montana", in Simon Evans, ed., *The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on Regional History of the Forty-ninth Parallel* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 140–154.





Figure 2.3. Red River Ox at a Railway Station, Circa 1860s. Source: Benjamin Franklin Upton, Minnesota Historical Society, visual resources collection, image 93945. *Wikipedia*. [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Red_River_carts_at_railway_station_station\(cropped\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Red_River_carts_at_railway_station_station(cropped).jpg). Public Domain.

as early as the 1830s.⁴⁵ As buffalo herds in Rupert's Land began to shrink because of increased commercial demand for hides, the Cree crossed the border in greater numbers. They were also drawn south by the higher prices American traders at Missouri River posts were paying for buffalo robes. By the mid-1870s, the increasing number of Cree, Assiniboine, Saukteaux (Plains Ojibwe), and Métis moving into Montana raised concern among American officials.

On the other hand, Canadian authorities favoured this migration as it lessened the demand placed on the government to supply Prairie bands with rations, as promised in the treaties. In 1879, the US army began evicting "British Indians" and Métis from hunting in northern Montana. This action prompted the Canadian government to begin negotiations with their American counterparts—a move that resulted in an agreement made by both countries to allow "British Indians" to follow the buffalo across the border, so long as they were not accompanied by the Sioux, who had

45 Elizabeth Sperry, "Ethnogenesis of the Metis, Cree and Chippewa in Twentieth Century, Montana", MA Thesis, Missoula, University of Montana, 2009, 51.

previously crossed into Canada after the battle of the Little Bighorn. Over time, the US government, Montana Native Americans, and American cattlemen became less tolerant of the presence of Canadian Native groups, taking steps to exclude them from the buffalo trade. Skirmishes between "British Indians" and the US army accelerated. In addition, Canadian officials, growing weary of the problem of cross-border cattle raiding conducted by "British Indians" based in Montana, reversed their former support of this southward migration. Eventually, the movement of Prairie groups across the border slowed to a trickle with the collapse of the buffalo economy.⁴⁶

It was at this time that the nature of the relationship with the British and Americans changed from one of parity and, arguably, limited control, to one of dependence.⁴⁷ Settlement and capitalist expansion, first on the American Plains and then on the Canadian Prairies, erased Aboriginal communities and the major resource that sustained them—the bison. Buffalo hunters were brought to the American plains by the railroad; specialized teams hunted the animals and soon their numbers were drastically reduced (Figure 2.4). Although the situation differed, the buffalo met a similar fate north of the border.

On the American plains, land was surveyed and claimed by speculators and small-scale farmers alike. Big business was also involved. The construction of railroads and the expansion of the southern plantation economy pushed the boundaries of the United States further west, making the removal of Native American tribes imperative. 'Colonized' peoples were viewed as inferior and therefore were not to be treated as equals. In this way, the takeover of Native lands was justified as essential for the advancement of the state.

Except for the two Riel rebellions, the brutal battles that took place in the 1860s and 1870s between the Sioux and federal troops in the US were not repeated in Canada. Yet, to some

46 Michel Hogue, "Disputing the Medicine Line: The Plains Crees and the Canadian-American Border, 1876–1885", *Montana: The Magazine of Western History* 52 (2002): 2–17.

47 Paul Thistle, "Dependence and Control: Indian-European Trade Relations in the Post-Kelsey Era", in Henry Epp, ed., *Three Hundred Prairie Years: Henry Kelsey's "Inland Country of Good Report"* (Regina: University of Regina, Canadian Plains Center, 1993), 129.



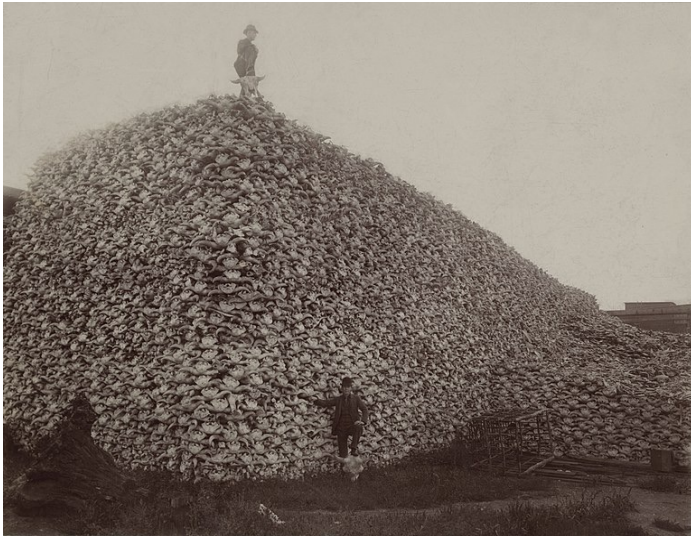


Figure 2.4. Bison Skull Pile. Source: *Wikipedia*. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Bison_skull_pile_edit.jpg. Public Domain.

degree, the Canadians adopted the American strategy of attrition. In the Dakotas and Montana, the US army purposefully destroyed food supplies, slaughtered horses, and supported the mass killing of buffalo. In Canada, the government also devised a plan to dispossess First Nations people from their lands. Such a scheme, according to James Daschuk, involved the systematic decision made by the Conservative government of John A. Macdonald to withhold rations that were promised to the Cree, Assiniboine, and other groups under the conditions of Treaty Six.⁴⁸ Specifically, this treaty delivered the promise that in times of famine, Canada would provide humanitarian assistance, particularly in the supply of food. Within a very short period, the Prairie bands referred to this pledge when the supply of bison virtually ended, but the government took this as an opportunity to “clear the plains” for the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) and an expected rush of settlers. Rations were withheld until the chiefs agreed to move their people to distant reserves. High death rates were not the result of a genetic susceptibility to disease, Daschuk argues, but malnourishment. As a result, Native peoples were

48 James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation and the Loss of Aboriginal Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2013).

weakened and ripe for the subjugation and humiliation carried out through various means, such as residential schools.

Although Daschuk does not declare that the Canadian government pursued a strategy of ethnic cleansing and genocide,⁴⁹ he convincingly demonstrates that they used starvation and disease to control, dispossess, and isolate Native peoples. This policy, along with the strategies carried out by the American army under Presidents Lincoln, Johnson, Grant, and Hayes, are evidence of what Patrick Wolfe views as the major organizing principle of settler colonial society and territoriality.⁵⁰ Wolfe argues that land acquisition and the wealth and opportunities it brought were the principal factors that motivated settlement and necessitated the process of Indigenous dispossession, as well as the legitimization of settler sovereignty over both land and people. The driving force behind this was capitalism and its tendency to support economic, political, and cultural hegemony. As a result, First Nations and Plains Native Americans were removed from their land and geographically marginalized on reserves and reservations before the end of the 19th century. For Indigenous peoples, the northern Plains and Prairies transformed from a borderland of middle ground to a borderland of *dispossession*. A new west, one directed by newer and more powerful eastern metropolitan forces, had succeeded an older west where Native peoples managed to retain a relative degree of autonomy, even in the face of integration into fur trade capitalism and the debilitating consequences of disease introduced by Euro-North Americans.

The pre-contact peoples of the Pacific Northwest littoral enjoyed, for the most part, high fertility rates and life expectancies because of an abundance of food from the sea. They also developed sophisticated material technologies and created trade and cultural relationships with interior peoples. Although different nations, these groups formed linkages through their related Salish languages, strong kinship ties,

49 Although Daschuk did not use the term genocide in his book, he did use it, as well as emphasizing ethnic cleansing, in a newspaper article soon after the book was published. See: James Daschuk, "When Canada used hunger to clear the West", *Globe and Mail*, July 19, 2013. <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/opinion/when-Canada-Used-hunger-to-clear-the-west/article13316877/>.

50 Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native".



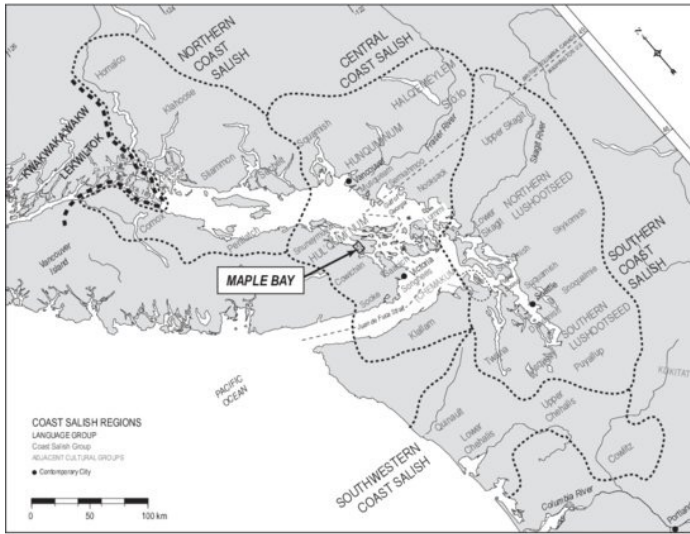


Figure 2.5. Coast Salish Language Regions. Source: Bill Angelbeck and Eric McLay, “The Battle at Maple Bay: The Dynamics of Coast Salish Political Organization through Oral Histories,” *Ethnohistory* 58, no. 3 (2011): 359–392. I wish to thank Bill Angelbeck for granting me permission to use this map.

and numerous partnerships (Figure 2.5). As was the case for the Great Plains, the question of relative power and autonomy within the white–Native relationship in the Pacific Northwest has engendered much debate. For example, Robin Fisher believes that prior to the establishment of British colonies in 1846, Natives and Europeans met as relative equals in the fur trade, and that the trade was largely beneficial to both parties.⁵¹ Gray Whaley contends that while “Oregon” was a space of imperial competition for both the Americans and the British, “Illahee”, the Indigenous conception of the same region, was understood by its inhabitants not so much as a territory but rather as a network of communities, kin relations, and spiritual and cultural relationships.⁵² During the early years, Whaley argues, the relationship between these

51 Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774–1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977).

52 Gray Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of Illahee: US Empire and the Transformation of an Indigenous World, 1792–1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

two conceptions of place was "dynamic" and "dialectical", with Oregon shaping Native life and Illahee affecting the configuration of the Euro-American presence in a distinctive manifestation of middle ground. Indeed, the word Illahee, as Whaley informs us, is drawn from Chinook jargon, an amalgam of Native and European languages that emerged as the language of the middle ground.

On the other hand, Cole Harris, buoyed by postcolonial theory, emphasizes the conflict between Europeans and Natives and the great harm caused by diseases introduced in this era.⁵³ While Harris recognizes that Native groups involved in the maritime trade exercised a considerable amount of power when dealing with Europeans and Americans, they, and the tribes involved in the later cordilleran trade, had to deal with the devastation wrought by European-introduced diseases and frequent acts of violence, creating what Harris calls a "culture of terror".

Harris asks himself: "why this violence when it would seem in the traders' interest to cultivate friendly relations with their trading partners?" He answers by arguing that violence was seen as a means to achieve profits in light of long-distance travel expenses incurred by the traders and the strategy employed by Chiefs of delaying trade until the end of the season.⁵⁴ He further adds that many of the labourers were rough, uneducated men who knew little about Indigenous cultures and, consequently, were consumed by fear and the hatred of others fostered by the prevailing racist attitudes of the period. However, while the trade introduced disease epidemics and initiated violence, it also resulted in a rapid increase in wealth among the Native peoples, at least in the earlier years of the fur trade era. This, in turn, supported traditional practices of the potlatch, slaving, and intertribal warfare. The more powerful groups attempted to control the trade and, in doing so, brought about considerable harm to weaker tribes.⁵⁵

53 R. Colebrook Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1996); "Social Power and Cultural Change in Pre-Colonial British Columbia", *BC Studies* 115/116 (1997/1998): 45–82.

54 Harris, "Social Power and Cultural Change", 64–65.

55 Robert Galois, "Introduction", in Robert Galois, ed., *A Voyage to*



From its headquarters at Fort Vancouver on the Columbia estuary, the HBC directed the trade of the interior. Bateaux laden with goods were sent to inland posts and returned with furs acquired from Native groups such as the Kutenai and the Nez Perce. However, the Americans were also key players in Oregon, particularly along the coast where furs from the interior often found their way to US ships. All this occurred within a transnational arena circumscribed by the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo (1848) which opened the territory between latitudes 40° and 54° 40' to commerce. This treaty was the result of what Patrick Callaway calls a "confused political geography", where "the near simultaneous discovery of the Oregon Country by the United States and Great Britain" made it "impossible for any nation to establish a claim to the land, and by extension the right to settle and develop the land, by right of initial discovery".⁵⁶

The settlement of the Oregon dispute rescaled space by enforcing a new border that disrupted traditional intertribal relations. The bordering that took place thereafter accelerated the process whereby federal, provincial, and state governments developed different strategies to relocate Indigenous peoples to reserves and reservations. The establishment of the reserve/reservation system altered access to resources for Indigenous groups and disrupted traditional property rights on both sides of the border.⁵⁷ However, there were significant differences in terms of process during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Settlement south of the 49th parallel occurred much more rapidly and was much more widespread than in British Columbia, thus leaving Indigenous groups more vulnerable to settler aggression. As in other parts of the US, the Dawes Act allowed Native Americans in the Pacific Northwest to have

the North West Side of America: The Journals of James Colnett, 1786–89 (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 1–74.

56 Patrick Callaway, "Ideology, Settlement and the Oregon Boundary Question", *Khronikos: the University of Maine graduate history student blog* (blog), October 31, 2012. <http://khronikosum.wordpress.com/2012/10/31/ideology-settlement-and-the-oregon-boundary-question/>.

57 Daniel Boxberger, "Lightning bolts and sparrow wings: A comparison of native fishing rights in British Columbia and Washington State", *Native Studies* 9, no. 1 (1993): 1–13.

their land, but only upon giving up their "Indian" status and becoming "non-Indian" US citizens.⁵⁸ Because much of the reservation land in this region was marginal for agriculture, the Dawes General Allotment Act divided reservations into small farms, which had a particularly disastrous impact on tribes. Unable to make an adequate living, many Natives had no other choice but to sell their farms to non-Natives.

While First Nations affairs were transferred from the HBC to the federal government after British Columbia entered Confederation in 1871, Ottawa preferred to let the province retain significant control over "Indian" affairs, particularly over the implementation of land policy.⁵⁹ The path of industrial capitalism and the influx of settlers accelerated the dispossession of lands and the marginalization of Indigenous peoples, but this process took some time. Before the influx of white settlers following the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (1886), Indigenous peoples remained demographically dominant. Eventually, the process of removal accelerated by the growth of the non-Native population resulted in the resettlement of tribes onto 1,500 small reserves, slightly more than a third of one percent of the land of the province.⁶⁰ This deterritorialization, in Harris' opinion, was followed by a process of capitalist reterritorialization whereby Native peoples were "freed from the constraints of custom and to labour detached from land".⁶¹ The reduction

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- 58 The Dawes Allotment Act passed by Congress in 1887 was instrumental to the fulfillment of these objectives. This act was designed to achieve six goals: break up the tribes as a social unit, encourage individual initiatives, further Native farming, reduce the cost of Native administration, secure parts of reservation land for Indian farming, and open the remaining land for white settlement. The law, which decreed that reservation land was to be divided into plots that could not be sold for 25 years and allocated to individual families, also stipulated that reservation land not claimed by Indians could be sold to outsiders. See: Leonard Carlson, *Indians, Bureaucrats, and Land: The Dawes Act and the Decline of Indian Farming* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1981).
- 59 Robin Fisher, "Indian Warfare and Two Frontiers: A Comparison of British Columbia and Washington Territory during the Early Years of Settlement", *Pacific Historical Review* 50, no. 1 (1981): 42.
- 60 R. Cole Harris, "How Did Colonialism Dispossess?: Comments from an Edge of Empire", *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94, no. 1 (2004): 167.
- 61 *Ibid.*, 172. Deterritorialization forces can undermine traditional





of traditional sources of food resulting from the loss of land and settler modification of the environment impelled them to enter into the industrial labour force, although, as Harris argues, capitalists were far more interested in acquiring Native land than seeking Native labour.⁶²

Conclusion and Perspective on Recent Developments

This overview has demonstrated that non-Native borders and treaties disrupted traditional Indigenous concepts of borders, bordering, and territory, and challenged the sovereignty of Indigenous nations inhabiting the Canadian–American borderlands. Through colonization, Europeans and North Americans fashioned territories of what they perceived as empty spaces, ignoring Indigenous peoples’ existence, connections, and sovereignty. In settling, colonists destroyed the more fluid territories of Indigenous peoples, dispossessing them of their lands, reducing their hunting and fishing grounds, breaking up their kinship networks, and impeding their mobility. Their actions circumvented and constricted Indigenous spatial interpretations of their natural surroundings. As a result, Indigenous peoples view the border as a European geopolitical creation imposed upon their territories—a symbol of colonial subjugation.⁶³ Processes of bordering served to restrict Native rights by forcing them into a position of subservience and dependence. Border enforcement challenges Indigenous geographies based on motion, fluidity, and adaptation to changes that occur in the natural world.

For Indigenous people, sovereignty entails authority over

identities, social relations, and the territories that sustain them while reterritorialization forces reassert identities and fixed geographies. See: Gerard Ó Tuathail and Timothy Luke, “Present at the (Dis)Integration: Deterritorialization and Reterritorialization in the New Wor(l)d Order”, *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 84, no. 3 (1994): 381–389.

62 Harris, “How Did Colonialism Dispossess?”, 173.

63 And yet, certain Indigenous groups have both used and disregarded the boundary as a means of economic gain (i.e., smuggling). And for much of the colonial period, Aboriginal groups used the border to set rival trading companies against each other as they attempted to acquire non-Native partners in the fur trade.

land and water, a right that is recognized in treaties but often ignored *de facto* under settler colonialism. Sovereignty incorporates self-government, which is, in turn, manifested in spatial terms, i.e., territory. Sometimes, this understanding of territory and associated rights transcends international borders, and it is under these circumstances that the possibility of disagreements among different levels of government—federal, state, provincial, and local—arises. There are cases where the sovereign rights of Indigenous nations do not align with the international border. This dilemma came to the fore during the late 19th century when, in the face of increased anxiety over undesirable immigration, the United States and Canada enacted more direct controls over cross-border movement. Trans-national connections among Indigenous peoples continued, but certain moves taken by both federal governments—such as establishing reservation/reserve locations distant from the border, withholding treaty goods from groups who spent too much time outside their country of residence, and disrupting the cultural and economic practices that drew Indigenous communities on both sides of the border together—served to undermine cross-border relations.⁶⁴

Recent history shows that Indigenous peoples in the borderlands have achieved some degree of success in having their sovereign territorial rights recognized, but the extent of their accomplishment varies between the two countries. In Canada, treaties negotiated between 1725 and 1923 cover most of Ontario, the Prairie Provinces, parts of Vancouver Island, the Northwest Territories, and Atlantic Canada. Since a 1973 Supreme Court of Canada decision, which recognized Aboriginal rights for the first time, led to the development of the Comprehensive Land Claims Policy and the first modern treaty (the James Bay and Northern Québec Agreement signed in 1975), Canada has signed 25 additional treaties, some of which assert the right to self-governance.⁶⁵ Presently, negotiations are taking place between Indigenous

64 Benjamin Hoy, "A Border without Guards: First Nations and the Enforcement of National Space", *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 25, no. 2 (2014): 107.

65 Government of Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "Treaties and agreements", *Government of Canada* website. <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100028574/1529354437231#chp4>.





communities and the government all across the country, including parts of British Columbia—where there were no treaties because the province did not recognize Indigenous title when it joined Confederation in 1871—and Québec. According to a recent Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development report, “the treaties and their affirmation in the [Canadian] Constitutional Act of 1982 and subsequent jurisprudence provide the legal foundation for the multiple processes of self-determination currently underway”.⁶⁶

Though the United States will no longer negotiate treaties with Native peoples, they have hundreds of treaties already in place, although many have not yet been ratified. The original, stated intent of the treaties was that the federal government agreed to protect tribes if the latter would give up much of their external sovereignty. There was, however, recognition of tribes as independent nations. This understanding begs the question of whether tribes can be independent nations if they surrender external sovereignty. Those tribes that agreed were to retain all internal governmental powers they possessed, including the right to make laws and enforce them within the tribe’s territory. In many treaties, the government guaranteed education, health care, housing, and other services. They also agreed to manage and protect tribes’ resources. However, an 1831 Supreme Court decision ruled that the United States would serve as guardians for Native Americans, whom they designated as wards in this relationship. This ruling provided the premise for the government to label Natives as legally incompetent, an understanding that later allowed Congress to federalize jurisdiction and break up reservations into individual allotments with the passing of the Dawes Act of 1887. Many years later, Congress implemented a more modern understanding of the duty of protection, which most call self-determination.

Presently, there are two kinds of trust duties: the first is an actual trust, one in which the United States holds and manages tribes’ assets; the second is referred to as a general trust relationship, which is a moral obligation to assist tribal interests, although there is no legal basis for the government

66 Organization for Economic and Co-operation and Development, *Linking Indigenous Communities with Regional Development in Canada*, OECD Rural Policy Reviews (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2020). <https://doi.org/10.1787/fa0f60c6-en>.

to act in such a way.⁶⁷ As stated on its website, the US Department of Justice recognizes "the sovereign status of federally recognized Indian tribes as *domestic dependent nations* [italics added] and reaffirms adherence to the principles of government-to-government relations".⁶⁸ While tribes supposedly have the constitutional right to govern themselves, Congress can limit tribal sovereignty. Despite Congress emphasizing government-to-government relations between the United States and Federally recognized tribes [N=574] and recognizing Indigenous sovereignty,⁶⁹ most Native American land continues to be held in trust by the United States, and federal law still regulates the economic rights of tribal governments and political rights. However, existing evidence supports the assertion that the government is attempting to change its traditional trustee role.

In their study of tribal self-governance over the last three decades of the 20th century, Harvard professors Joseph Kalt and Joseph Singer concluded that tribes are able to exercise substantial, albeit limited, sovereignty because their rights lie in the fact that Native American Nations pre-exist the United States.⁷⁰ Yet, even though tribal sovereignty is recognized and protected by the Constitution and treaties, history shows that Native Americans, for much of American history, have lived under abject poverty. This is a result, Kalt and Singer maintain, of a system of reservation (mis)management that prevailed until the mid-1970s, which proved to be "an economic, social and cultural disaster for Indian America,

67 Rory Taylor, "6 Native leaders on what it would look like if the US kept its promises", Vox website, September 23, 2019. <https://www.vox.com/first-person/2019/9/23/20872713/native-american-indian-treaties>. This interpretation is provided by Matthew Fletcher, director of the Indigenous Law and Policy Center at Michigan State University College of Law.

68 "Native American Policies", *The United States Department of Justice* website. <https://www.justice.gov/otj/native-american-policies>.

69 "Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies," *The White House* website, September 23, 2004. <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2004/09/20040923-4.html>.

70 Joseph Kalt and Joseph Singer, "Myths and Realities of Tribal Sovereignty: The Law and Economics of Indian Self-Rule", *The Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development* website. <https://hpaied.org/sites/default/files/publications/myths.pdf>.





and an expensive mistake for the US government”.⁷¹ They argue that self-determination and consequent enforcement of Indigenous sovereignty is the only way to improve the lot of Native Americans.

The status of Indigenous peoples of the borderlands is improving, although there is still a long way to go to create inclusive societies that affirm Indigenous territory and sovereignty.⁷² For Indigenous peoples throughout the greater borderland zone, the imposed settler colonial geopolitical border bears economic, social, cultural, and psychological consequences. The border is much more than a “medicine line”; this metaphor only symbolizes the relationships between Native peoples and whites during one period in the history of the North American west.⁷³ The story of Indigenous borderlands in North America is a tale that requires much greater consideration than given here. As David Stirrup and Gillian Roberts maintain, “the border and its history represent a clear and vital paradigm for examining the theoretical issues that Indigenous discourse in North America raises, and presents truly significant political and ethical questions that

71 *Ibid.*, 43.

72 There are six federally recognized tribes in the US that straddle the international border, but many more whose homelands are in the borderlands shared by both countries. In total, there are more than 40 American tribes that live along or near the northern and southern borders of the US, as well as a comparable number of Canadian First Nations. See: Rachael Marchbanks, “The Borderline: Indigenous Communities on the International Frontier”, *Tribal College Journal of American Indian Higher Education* 26, no. 3 (2015), website edition. <https://tribalcollegejournal.org/borderline-Indigenous-communities-international-frontier/>; Sara Singleton, “Not our borders: Indigenous people and the struggle to maintain shared lives and cultures in post-9/11 North America”, *Border Policy Research Institute Publications* (Bellingham: Western Washington University, 2009): 1. Examples of tribes divided by the border include: the Blood/Blackfeet of southern Alberta and northern Montana, the Mohawk/St. Regis of Ontario, Québec and New York State, and the Okanagan band of British Columbia and Washington State.

73 The “Medicine Line” was a paradox; for some it meant escaping punishment by crossing the border into what was a safety net of neighbouring tribes of “the Queen’s” or “Grandmother’s Land”, while for others, it simply became an artificially imposed line that cut across traditional territories and banished people from their homeland and relatives.

must be addressed in relation to the people themselves—those communities that have resided in the borderland, in many cases predating the establishment of the national border".⁷⁴

The story of Indigenous borderlands is a narrative exploring how Native groups have developed strategies to adapt to changing conditions that, in many ways, have threatened their existence. It is also one that highlights their re-establishment and assertion of sovereignty. As discussed, the border meant different things to different groups at different times and in different places, with processes of bordering themselves varying over time and place as well. Additionally, because the borderlands evolved differently, the situations of Indigenous groups within these borderlands differ and thus may require different strategies for reconciliation and accommodation. However, for all Native groups living in this shared part of North America, the border and the borderland, respectively and ironically, offer a concept and a space for resistance. The border is a symbol not just of exploitation and dispossession, but of interaction and negotiation as well. It continues to be a paradox, serving as both a barrier and a resource in Indigenous struggle for what they see as their rightful place in North America.

There is one constant factor that transcends all Indigenous borderlands straddling the United States and Canada—*The Treaty of Amity, Commerce, and Navigation, Between His Britannic Majesty and the United States of America*, commonly known as the Jay Treaty or Jay's Treaty, signed in November of 1794 (Figure 2.6). This treaty between Great Britain and the United States was the product of trade and border negotiations between the two countries. Although it covered several terms, the stipulation that interests us most is Article III, which recognizes Indigenous peoples' pre-existing right to move freely with their goods across the international border. Such a guarantee of free passage of peoples and goods laid the foundation for the transcendence of Indigenous borderlands across an arbitrary line delineating non-Native territorial sovereignty. These borderlands differed from traditional Indigenous borderlands in that they resulted not from the

74 David Stirrup and Gillian Roberts, "Introduction to the ARCS Special Issue on Culture and the Canada-US Border", *American Review of Canadian Studies* 40, no. 3 (2010): 323.



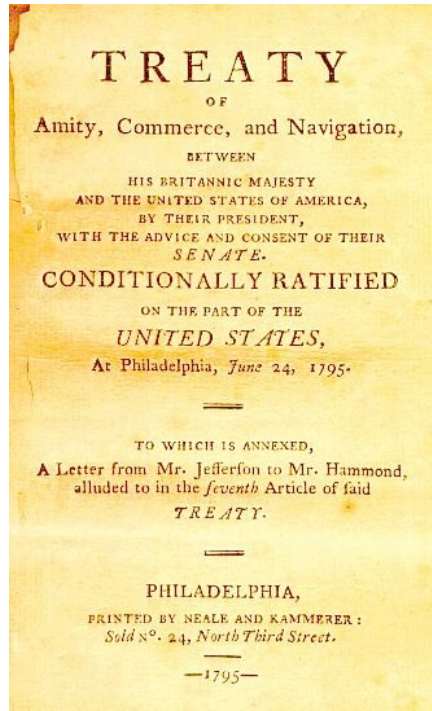


Figure 2.6. 1795 pamphlet containing text of Jay Treaty. Source: Wikimedia Commons. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jay%27s-treaty.jpg>. Public Domain.

interplay of two neighbouring but different groups, but rather they were territories bisected by a superimposed border that separated families, kin, communities, and commerce.

Much to the chagrin of Native groups is the fact that governments have not always supported such movement. In particular, the Canadian government has never affirmed the Treaty, arguing on that basis that it does not apply in Canada, despite being ratified by Great Britain when Canada was a colony. The US, on the other hand, continued to recognize the Indigenous right to cross the border freely until the implementation of the Immigration Act of 1924, which provided that only those eligible for citizenship could enter the US. This was later superseded by a 1928 Act which codified Native Americans' right of free passage across the border. The Immigration and Nationality Act of 1952 changed

things once more with the introduction of a bloodline requirement, which determined that only Indigenous persons from Canada with 50 percent "American Indian" blood should be beneficiaries of the Act of 1928.⁷⁵ The hurdle presented by Canada's refusal to recognize Article III of the Jay Treaty has continued to suppress cross-border flows of migration and trade among Indigenous peoples in all the Canadian–American borderland regions. For all Indigenous peoples, the Jay Treaty is crucial because, in recognizing the right of passage across the border, it sanctions Indigenous geographies not circumscribed by conventional European concepts of territory and sovereignty. How this agreement is deciphered and applied by different parties will determine the future evolution of the Indigenous borderlands.⁷⁶

75 Greg Boos and Greg McLawson, "American Indians Born in Canada and the Right of Free Access to the United States", *Border Policy Research Institute Research Report No. 20* (Bellingham: Border Policy Research Institute, University of Western Washington, 2013), 4–7.

76 A major development in this story is the April 23, 2021 R. v. Desautel decision issued by the Supreme Court of Canada. This ruling determined that Aboriginal people, whose ancestors once lived on lands that fell under Canadian sovereignty, have existing rights under section 35(1) of the Canadian Constitution, to hunt, fish, and gather on their traditional territories regardless of the border. While the decision does not support or deny Jay Treaty claims or an Aboriginal border crossing right, it has the potential, depending on interpretation, to impact the implementation of treaty privileges and right of passage throughout the Canada–United States borderlands. The decision, however, did not make any determination concerning Métis right to access lands to practice an existing Aboriginal right. Source: This information comes from: Karl Hele, "Existing Aboriginal rights in a borderland", *The Sault Star*, May 7, 2021. <https://www.saultstar.com/opinion/existing-aboriginal-rights-in-a-borderland>.





Chapter 3

Sovereignty and Borders in Globalization

David C. Atkinson

This chapter considers how we might apprehend the historical relationship between sovereignty and globalization. Building upon recent scholarship that places sovereignty at the center of legal and imperial history, I take as a case study the US–Canada Pacific borderlands and the vexed question of Asian migration in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This region and issue provide a focused but kaleidoscopic lens through which to examine the forces that defined sovereignty in the multiple contexts of empire, state-formation, and globalization during an especially dynamic period in North American and world history. Following a historiographical and conceptual overview, this chapter will offer research questions designed to elucidate and historicize those complex relationships in ways that might be transferable to other historical and contemporary borderlands.

The study of sovereignty is closely associated with the fields of political science and international relations. These lines of scholarship tend toward explicating sovereignty's legal and philosophical foundations, often adopting a panoramic perspective that does not necessarily reveal peoples' lived experiences. These discussions also incline toward Eurocentrism, as if sovereignty is something that only European states and empires either assiduously aggregated for themselves or imposed upon others. Of course, Europeans often did exactly that, but these processes also played out in other regions, sometimes because of European interference,

but at times independent of it.¹

Recent historical scholarship has focused more explicitly on the relationships between sovereignty, borders, and empire. Historians of law and international relations have begun to unravel how European notions of sovereignty influenced the development of an international legal regime rooted in empire.² Scholars of migration and borderlands have continued their interest in borders and border policies, bringing the concept of sovereignty to bear on discussions of migrant mobility.³ At the same time, recent studies have deepened our understanding of how Indigenous and colonial actors historically adjudicated competing sovereign claims throughout North America and elsewhere.⁴ As these and other

- 1 Important examples include F. H. Hinsely, *Sovereignty*, second ed. (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1986); Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994); Jens Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Stephen D. Krasner, *Sovereignty: Organized Hypocrisy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).
- 2 Antony Anghie, *Imperialism, Sovereignty, and the Making of International Law* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Douglas Howland and Luise White, eds., *The State of Sovereignty: Territories, Laws, Populations* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2009); Lauren Benton, *A Search for Sovereignty: Law and Geography in European Empires, 1400-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010); "Liberal Empire and International Law", *Forum, American Historical Review* 117, no. 1 (February 2012): 67-148; Lauren Benton and Lisa Ford, *Rage for Order: The British Empire and the Origins of International Law* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016).
- 3 Jeremy Adelman and Stephen Aron, "From Borderlands to Borders: Empires, Nation-States, and the Peoples in Between in North American History", *The American Historical Review* 104, no. 3 (June 1999): 814-841; Mae M. Ngai, *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2004); Adam McKeown, *Melancholy Order: Asian Migration and the Globalization of Borders* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2008).
- 4 Andrés Reséndez, *Changing National Identities at the Frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800-1850* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Lisa Ford, *Settler Sovereignty: Jurisdiction and Indigenous People in America and Australia, 1788-1836* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010); "Forum: American Indians and the History of US Foreign Relations",





works suggest, it is crucial that we historicize sovereignty because it has been the preeminent legal and normative principle upon which polities authenticate their right to exist. Sovereignty connotes authority, and governments regularly deploy that power to circumscribe the political, economic, and social lives of hundreds of millions of people. Understanding how sovereignty has functioned historically also offers important insights for contemporary border management. After all, the forces that buffet and buttress borders—such as migration, trade, security, and identity—continue to shape borderland politics that remain rooted in conceptions of sovereignty.

What is sovereignty? The concept has anchored international relations since the 17th century. During this time, scholars, philosophers, and jurists—from the foundational political theorists Jean Bodin, John Locke, and Thomas Hobbes to influential 20th century international relations scholars like Hedley Bull and Stephen Krasner—have endeavored to delineate the contours of sovereignty both inside and between post-Westphalian nation-states.⁵ If a consensus has emerged from this long debate, it is that sovereignty, at its most basic level, constitutes “supreme legal authority”, vested both internally in relation to alternative sources of authority and externally in relation to other states.⁶ This simple dictum has survived countless contortions over the centuries, and it remains the core concept of what it means to be sovereign in a nominally anarchical community of equally

Diplomatic History 39, no. 5 (November, 2015): 926–966; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, *The White Possessive: Property, Power, and Indigenous Sovereignty* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2015); Stuart Banner, *Possessing the Pacific: Land, Settlers, and Indigenous People from Australia to Alaska* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007).

- 5 Jean Bodin, *On Sovereignty: Four Chapters from the Six Books of the Commonwealth*, Julian H. Franklin, ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992); John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, Peter Laslett, ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988); Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Edwin Curley, ed. (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1994); Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977); Krasner, *Sovereignty*.
- 6 Alan James, *Sovereign Statehood: The Basis of International Society* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1986), 3; Hinsely, *Sovereignty*, 1.

sovereign states.⁷

It is also important to recognize that sovereignty is a social, political, and legal construct, despite its apparent intransience. It is historically contingent: a product of human agency and not the spontaneous invention of some objective natural order. Monarchs and constitutionalists alike may have claimed to derive their sovereign rights from divinity, providence, or some such hidden celestial arbiter, but it remains a profoundly terrestrial concept that was conjured by mere mortals. This might seem like an obvious point, at least to historians and constructivist-oriented international relations scholars, but it bears extrapolation. Historically, as Lauren Benton puts it, sovereignty "depend[ed] on recurring proofs, including mapping, description, the founding of political communities, ceremonies, recognizing new vassals, and administrative acts designed to support claims to discovery or possession".⁸

Despite broad unanimity on the concept's basic definition, many of sovereignty's broader meanings and implications remain resistant to consensus. The forces of contemporary globalization have proven particularly debilitating to sovereignty, both in abstract discursive terms and in the concrete calculations of state and non-state actors. While few theorists would advocate discarding the concept altogether, there are those who recognize that sovereignty has faced real and conceptual challenges in the era of globalization. The near-simultaneity of the Cold War's collapse, the emergence of a widespread public internet, and a surge of neoliberal economic policies that fundamentally restructured the international economic order provided an especially auspicious moment for the reconsideration of sovereignty's meaning and continued significance, or so many concluded.⁹

7 Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, 8.

8 Benton, *The Search for Sovereignty*, 23.

9 See for example Joseph Camilleri and Jim Falk, *The End of Sovereignty: The Politics of a Shrinking and Fragmenting World* (Brookfield, VT: Edward Elgar, 1992); Hideaki Shinoda, *Re-Examining Sovereignty: From Classical Theory to the Global Age* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2000; Barry Buzan and Richard Little, "Beyond Westphalia? Capitalism after the 'Fall'", *Review of International Studies* 25 (December 1999): 89–104. For an analysis of earlier alternatives to sovereignty, see Spruyt, *The Sovereign*





Even as scholars argue about the effects of global interdependence on traditional conceptions of sovereignty, they have also debated the precise historical contours of those processes we associate with globalization. Is it a feature of late 20th century industrial and financial capitalism, which culminated in new structures of neoliberal economic and political order?¹⁰ Or is that phenomenon itself merely another stage in the abiding tendency of human beings to trade with, fight, and colonize one another? After all, the expansive imperatives of empire drove the late 19th century proliferation of new trade networks, circuits of human mobility, and conduits for the transfer of culture and ideas.

Despite the post-1970s thrust of much of the literature on globalization, it is now practically axiomatic that globalization has deep historical roots.¹¹ It is also clear that the concept of sovereignty has withstood this interrogative post-Cold War storm, as it has weathered the unremitting challenges of war, empire, integration, disintegration, and globalization since the Westphalian peace of 1648. Indeed, sovereignty appears especially durable today, despite—or perhaps because of—a quarter century of regional integration, relaxed borders, and the liberalization of international trade. Regardless,

State and Its Competitors.

- 10 For examples of this line of reasoning see Manfred B. Steger and Ravi K. Roy, *Neoliberalism: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); Samir Dasgupta and Jan Nederveen Pieterse, eds., *Politics of Globalization* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc., 2009); Jagdish Bhagwati, *In Defense of Globalization* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Joseph E. Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003); William Greider, *One World, Ready or Not: The Manic Logic of Global Capitalism*, first Touchstone edition. (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1998).
- 11 Jürgen Osterhammel, *The Transformation of the World: A Global History of the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015); Emily Rosenberg et al., *A World Connecting: 1870-1945* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2012); Peter N. Stearns, *Globalization in World History* (New York: Routledge, 2009); Manfred Steger, *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Jürgen Osterhammel and Niels P. Petersson, *Globalization: A Short History*, trans. Dona Geyer (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); C. A. Bayly, *The Birth of the Modern World, 1780-1914* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2003); A. G. Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in World History* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002).

if we accept the disruptive influence of globalization on contemporary ideas about sovereignty, then it makes sense that notions of sovereignty must also have come under scrutiny during earlier periods of ostensible global interconnectedness. The rest of this chapter will explore that question in the context of Asian migration to the US–Canada Pacific borderlands at the turn of the 20th century.

North American Borderlands, Asian Migration, & Sovereignty

According to Adam McKeown, "the idea that border control is a foundation of sovereignty and that sovereignty entails a power to unilaterally regulate human entries have become basic principles of the international system".¹² Therefore, it makes sense to explore the historical dimensions of the relationship between sovereignty, borders, and globalization through the lens of migration in general and through the contentious issue of Asian immigration in the US–Canada Pacific borderlands more specifically. This region represented a node of intersecting imperial interests during the late 19th and early 20th centuries: the British Empire in North America; the growing American imperial project in the Pacific; and the emergent Japanese empire in East Asia. It was also the site of contiguous national projects—American and Canadian—with comparable federal and constitutional systems and similarly restive constituent provinces/states that strained against federal obstinacy on questions of Asian immigration. As Brian DeLay writes, "borderlands are zones of plural sovereignty", and the US–Canada Pacific border constituted a regional, national, imperial, and global borderland, containing a multiplicity of sometimes competing, overlapping, and complementary sovereignties.¹³ This makes it a rich and multifaceted space in

12 McKeown, *Melancholy Order*, 2.

13 Brian DeLay, "Introduction", in Brian DeLay, ed., *North American Borderlands* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 5. For a discussion of the idea of multiple borderlands see David C. Atkinson, "Out of One Borderland, Many: The 1907 Anti-Asian Riots and the Spatial Dimensions of Race and Migration in the Canadian-US Pacific Borderlands", in Benjamin Bryce and Alexander Freund, eds., *Entangling Migration History: Borderlands and Transnationalism in the United States and Canada* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2015), 120–140.





which to explore historical questions of sovereignty.¹⁴

Animosities toward Asian immigration was a near constant feature of politics in the North American west, and especially in the US–Canada Pacific borderlands. These sentiments flourished in response to mid-19th century Chinese immigration, upon which the American and Canadian governments enacted severe restrictions in 1882 and 1885, respectively. Increasing numbers of Japanese immigrants arrived in the following years, and whites on both sides of the border once again lobbied for exclusion, citing economic competition, racial unassimilability, and potential disloyalty. The Japanese government vigorously resisted its emigrants' mistreatment abroad, and this standoff finally culminated in the Japanese–American and Japanese–Canadian Gentleman's Agreements of 1907–08, under which Japan agreed to limit transpacific labor emigration.

South Asian migrants began to arrive first in British Columbia and then the United States at the same time as the Japanese. Although they came in much smaller numbers, they nevertheless engendered the same fears and anxieties across both sides of the US–Canada border. Further complicating matters, British imperial and diplomatic authorities monitored the situation, cognizant of Indian opinion on the subcontinent and the potential for subversion among emigrant South Asians in North America. Following riots against South Asian immigrants in Bellingham, Washington, and Vancouver, British Columbia, in September 1907, the Canadian government instituted the so-called "continuous passage" requirement the following year. Under the terms of this provision, all immigrants were obliged to enter Canada directly from their place of citizenship. Since no direct steamship service connected the Indian subcontinent with Canadian ports, this

14 Scholars are actively uncovering a richly-textured transnational landscape on the US–Canada border. Benjamin H. Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill, eds., *Bridging National Borders in North America: Comparative and Transnational Histories* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 310–350; Kornel Chang, *Pacific Connections: the Making of the US–Canadian Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Sterling Evans, ed., *The Borderlands of the American and Canadian Wests: Essays on the Regional History of the Forty-ninth Parallel* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Seema Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

requirement effectively prohibited South Asian immigration to Canada.¹⁵

As this brief overview suggests, the deeply divisive question of Asian labor migration brought the British, American, Chinese, and Japanese empires into conflict, especially in the US–Canada Pacific borderlands. In this way, the local, national, regional, imperial, and international politics engendered by this issue bring into focus sovereignty's many dimensions and repercussions. Asian migration engendered white nativism, violence, duplicitous immigration policies, tense

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- 15 The literature on Asian immigration to North America is well developed, although it does not always engage explicitly with the concept of sovereignty. For Canada see, Ken Adachi, *The Enemy That Never Was* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976); W. Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy toward Orientals in British Columbia* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1978); Patricia Roy, *A White Man's Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrations, 1858-1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989); Patricia Roy, *The Oriental Question: Consolidating a White Man's Province, 1914-41* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003); Isabel Wallace, *Not Fit to Stay: Public Health Panics and South Asian Exclusion* (Vancouver: The University of British Columbia Press, 2016). For the United States see, Erika Lee, *At America's Gates: Chinese Immigration during the Exclusion Era, 1882-1943* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2003); Alexander Saxton, *The Indispensable Enemy: Labor and the Anti-Chinese Movement in California* (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1995); Andrew Gyory, *Closing the Gate: Race, Politics, and the Chinese Exclusion Act* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Roger Daniels, *Asian America: Chinese and Japanese in the United States since 1850* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988); Ronald Takaki, *Strangers From a Different Shore: A History of Asian Americans*, rev. ed. (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1998); Madeline Yuan-yin Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home: Transnationalism and Migration Between the United States and South China, 1882-1943* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). For two different takes on the broader history of Asian restriction efforts outside North America see David C. Atkinson, *The Burden of White Supremacy: Containing Asian Migration in the British Empire and the United States* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016) and Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).





diplomacy, and vigilant border management techniques, all of which took place against a backdrop of global capitalism, imperialism, and state formation.¹⁶ Investigating sovereignty's multi-dimensional qualities through the issue of Asian immigration in this region allows us to clarify the complex politics of sovereignty in borderlands through a lens that is at once focused but expansive. Hence, the US–Canada Pacific borderlands provide a rich and varied backdrop to frame this inquiry.

Research Questions

The remainder of this discussion will explore sovereignty's historically contingent and constructed nature in the US–Canada Pacific borderlands through the lens of Asian migrant mobility and restriction. It pivots around a series of questions that scholars might apply in this and other borderland contexts. Three main themes emerge from this analysis. First, borderlands are characterized by amorphous boundaries, and multiple sovereignties can and do intersect in such spaces. Sometimes sovereign claims mutually reinforce one another, while at other times conflicting ones produce tension. Second, the history of Asian migration in the region illustrates how sovereignty in a borderland context can both facilitate and inhibit mobility, depending on the particular interests of those claiming suzerainty. Finally, this approach illuminates the extent to which international, imperial, national, regional, and local contingencies influence the enactment of sovereignty in borderlands, as is the case elsewhere.

I will begin by offering some observations on the interplay of multiple sovereignties in the same space. Did the US–Canada Pacific borderlands contain a multiplicity of sovereignties during the late 19th and early 20th centuries? If so, how were those multiple sovereignties managed? How did they interact with one another? Did the influence of different sovereign aspirants deepen at different times and in different places? What contingencies informed the contours of sovereignty in this region, and how did those contingencies distinguish or duplicate the politics of Asian immigration restriction on both sides of the border?

16 For in depth discussions of these developments see Atkinson, *The Burden of White Supremacy*, and Chang, *Pacific Connections*.

A cursory investigation reveals that multiple plaintiffs did indeed vie for the authority to manage Asian mobility in US–Canada Pacific borderlands, especially after the discovery of gold drew thousands of migrants from around the world—including tens of thousands of Chinese—to mines in British Columbia and California in the mid-19th century.¹⁷ State and provincial governments along the Pacific coast claimed the sovereign right to determine who was entitled to enter, settle, and work in those territories. This brought them into conflict with other predominate sources of sovereignty. Californians, for example, repeatedly tussled with the federal government in Washington over the right to regulate the entry and activities of Asian immigrants.¹⁸ A similar struggle characterized British Columbian relations with the federal government in Ottawa. The British government's imperial and foreign policy prerogatives further circumscribed Canadian sovereignty, even as the latter exercised restraint over British Columbian sovereignty. At the same time, the Meiji government in Tokyo tried to protect the sovereign rights of its subjects to migrate into the international community, as did the Qing government in Beijing (despite the relentless erosion of Chinese sovereignty by foreign powers in the late 19th century).

The intersection of provincial, federal, and imperial sovereignty especially complicated the situation in British Columbia, and this case provides a clear illustration of the contingencies that conditioned the practice of sovereignty in the region. Superficially, the British Columbian case bears a striking resemblance to the Californian one, both polities being sovereign provincial/state governments with authority limited by distant federal governments. Yet a number of domestic, imperial, and diplomatic contingencies shaped the specific policy options that were open to governments in Sacramento and Victoria. Questions of sovereignty were chief among them.

17 For transnational studies of the gold rushes, see Hsu, *Dreaming of Gold, Dreaming of Home*; Aims McGuinness, *Path of Empire: Panama and the California Gold Rush* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009); Erika Lee, *The Making of Asian America: A History* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2015), 59–88.

18 Lee, *The Making of Asian America*, 89–190; Thomas A. Bailey, *Theodore Roosevelt and the Japanese-American Crises: An Account of the International Complications Arising from the Race Problem on the Pacific Coast* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1934).





For example, the discovery of gold in the Fraser River Canyon in 1858 enmeshed the newly established colony of British Columbia in the same global gyre of mobility that had previously embroiled Californians and Australians. Roused by an array of racial and economic apprehensions, provincial legislators first attempted to curtail the rights and mobility of Chinese migrants on the goldfields. Following confederation in 1871, British Columbians mobilized against the continued arrival of Chinese immigrants and placed increasing pressure on the federal government in Ottawa and the imperial government in London to restrict their entry. Their efforts only intensified when growing numbers of Japanese and South Asian migrants arrived at British Columbian ports throughout the latter decades of the 19th century.¹⁹

If British Columbians had enjoyed absolute sovereignty, then complete Asian exclusion would likely have ensued. But they did not. Sovereignty may theoretically inhere a sense of immutability, but the British North America Act had created areas of concurrent sovereignty in Canada. Section 95 accorded preeminence to provincial legislation regarding immigration (and agriculture) “as long and as far only as it is not repugnant to any Act of the Parliament of Canada”.²⁰ The British Columbian urge to discriminate explicitly against Asian immigrants was often repugnant to the federal government. While some British Columbians craved only the comforts of whiteness, others in the province and beyond gazed west with an eye toward the commercial possibilities of increased interaction with Asia.²¹ The stakes of British Columbians’ exclusionary compulsions intensified when the Canadian government adhered to the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Commerce and Navigation in 1906. Ottawa legislators and Canadian business interests more broadly could not afford to disrupt this potentially lucrative commercial relationship. Just as importantly, British imperial and foreign policy demanded courtesy toward the subjects of a crucial East Asian partner and ally after 1902—Japan—and a crucial South Asian

19 Roy, *A White Man’s Province*.

20 “Section 95”, British North America Act, 1867 – Enactment no. 1: <https://www.justice.gc.ca/eng/rp-pr/csj-sjc/constitution/lawreg-loireg/p1t13.html>. Accessed on July 13, 2017.

21 Anne Shannon, *Finding Japan: Early Canadian Encounters with Asia* (Vancouver: Heritage House Publishing Company Ltd., 2012), 96–112; Chang, *Pacific Connections*, 54–88.

colony—India.²²

This competition to determine the stringency of borders in the North American west took place in a context characterized by the dynamics of state formation, empire, and global capitalism. Indeed, these very processes of globalization had instigated the 19th century infatuation with borders and immigration control. Once again, this raises some key questions about mobility and sovereignty in the US–Canada Pacific borderlands. In what ways did the concept of sovereignty facilitate mobility and globalization, and to what extent did it facilitate immobility and border-making? How did the overlapping and often contradictory forces of empire, state-building, border-making, and global capitalism complicate the question of sovereignty in the region? How was sovereignty defined and managed in a borderland that was simultaneously enmeshed in multiple regions, nations, states, and empires? What implications did these contingencies have for the mobility or immobility of people, goods, and ideas? Was sovereignty constitutive of these social forces and movements, or was it, in fact, a product of them?

A sense of immutability has been an essential feature of sovereignty—and of border-making—throughout history, and questions like these help to penetrate that veneer of inviolability. Writing in 1841 on the relationship between "superior" and "dependent" governments in the context of the British Empire, for example, Sir George Cornewall Lewis declared that sovereign governments "possess an absolute and despotic power", tempered only by "moral restraints".²³ American conceptions of sovereignty and immigration regulation developed along similarly stark lines. As Hidetaka Hirota argues, the "plenary power doctrine" emerged from Supreme Court rulings in the latter decades of the 19th century. This principle "held that Congress had the inherent power to exclude and deport aliens and that immigration policy devised by Congress, as a matter of national sovereignty, was beyond judicial review".²⁴

22 Atkinson, *The Burden of White Supremacy*, 76–89.

23 Sir George Cornewall Lewis, *An Essay on the Government of Dependencies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 2.

24 Hidetaka Hirota, "Exclusion on the Ground: Racism, Official Discretion, and the Quotidian Enforcement of General Immigration Law in the Pacific Northwest Borderland", *American Quarterly* 69,





Historically, however, the quotidian enactment of sovereignty permitted more ambiguity—and greater complexity—than these uncompromising construals allow. As Kornel Chang argues, the US–Canada border in the Pacific Northwest “had the quality of a selective membrane, permeable to certain people and groups but not to others, calibrated by race”.²⁵ The task of determining who or what could cross that border fell to human beings. The commission of sovereignty was therefore subject to distinctly subjective qualities like caprice and self-interest. As F. H. Hinsely renders it in his pivotal treatise on the subject: “although we talk of it loosely as something concrete which may be lost or acquired, eroded or increased, sovereignty is not a fact. It is a concept which men in certain circumstances have applied”.²⁶ Practitioners in particular elide that singularly important fact when they conceive of sovereignty as an inherent and permanent fact of political life. Despite its seemingly “natural” quality, sovereignty is the creation of human ingenuity and exigency. It is an idea, and as such it is, as Jens Bartelson contends, “historically open, contingent, and unstable”.²⁷ Sovereignty is not static, nor is it unprejudiced.

As the preceding discussion illustrates, myriad contingencies determined the enactment of sovereignty along the boundaries of the US–Canada Pacific borderlands. Depending on which interests they represented, those contingencies could either lubricate or choke the conduits of mobility throughout the region. On one hand, white laborers in places like Bellingham, Washington and Vancouver, British Columbia regularly articulated their contempt for Asian labor migrants and the industrialists who enticed them to the Pacific Northwest. White militants and their allies in the government and press appealed for exclusion in the name of white racial, economic, and political supremacy. Representatives of capital and industry in the region, on the other hand, sought cheap and reliable labor for their canneries, fisheries, and railroads. While some preferred that labor be white, others concerned themselves only with cost and dependability. The

no. 2 (June 2017): 360.

25 Chang, *Pacific Connections*, 158–159.

26 Hinsely, *Sovereignty*, 1. Indeed, Hinsely’s formulation is perhaps constructivist before constructivism, in terms of international relations theory.

27 Bartelson, *A Genealogy of Sovereignty*, 2.

local, provincial, state, federal, and imperial governments tasked with mediating these often-incompatible impulses, as we have seen, juggled an array of political, economic, and diplomatic demands that constantly eluded conciliation.²⁸

Conclusion

Numerous postulants vied over the sovereign right to determine borders in the US–Canada Pacific borderlands in the late 19th century, as the struggle over Asian migration illustrates, and various contingencies framed the policy options available to the stakeholders. On both sides of the border, white activists relentlessly pressed for stricter controls. In doing so, they articulated a concept of racialized sovereignty that they insisted defined them and their rights as white men. South of the 49th parallel, western state governments asserted their right to control immigration vis-à-vis a federal government that demanded deference to the exigencies of American foreign relations and a Supreme Court that had determined Congress alone possessed the constitutional right to regulate immigration.²⁹ The irascibility of western racism grated against the demands of American foreign policy in the Pacific, which included a new colony in the Philippines, the fantasy of unbridled economic access to millions of Chinese consumers, and an increasingly assertive rival in Meiji Japan.³⁰ To the north, British Columbians strained against two preponderate sources of sovereignty that circumscribed their authority to manage provincial and national borders: the federal government in Ottawa and the imperial government in London.

The Canadian government unsuccessfully tried to reconcile

28 For a contemporary investigation of these conflicting imperatives see *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration* (Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1902)

29 *Henderson v. Mayor of City of New York*, See Hidetaka Hirota, *Expelling the Poor: Atlantic Seaboard States and the Nineteenth-Century Origins of American Immigration Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

30 Walter LaFeber, *The Clash: US-Japanese Relations Throughout History* (New York: Norton, 1998); Bruce Cumings, *Dominion from Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).





the white supremacist cravings of its western constituents with the nascent possibilities of commercial and foreign relations with East Asia. The sovereign prerogatives of the British Empire stood preeminent over both, as imperial administrators endeavored to manage the implacable—and ultimately irreconcilable—demands of zealous racial activists in British Columbia and equally ardent opponents of discrimination in Tokyo, Calcutta, and elsewhere.³¹ As this suggests, in addition to fundamental questions about the scope of sovereignty within states, the politics of Asian migration also necessitated attention to questions of external sovereignty. The Japanese government in particular challenged discriminatory restrictions against its subjects based on long-debated normative principles that had conditioned the treatment of foreign nationals and immigrants between equally sovereign states for centuries. Chinese migrants and diplomats made the same complaints, as did representatives of South Asians, be they imperial agents of the India Office or anticolonial activists affiliated with the Ghadar Party.³²

Borderlands provide an especially fertile backdrop for analyzing the historical construction of sovereignty. Recognizing sovereignty as historically constructed means we can subject it to scrutiny from multiple perspectives, elucidating the different ways in which people have conceived it at different times and in different places. Moreover, and just as importantly from the perspective of the BIG Project, “a historical perspective might show us how sovereignty’s content and relationship to other legal and moral norms are contingent—and, therefore, also subject to change”, as Mae Ngai puts it in her influential study of American immigration policy.³³ Ultimately, the borders that people have made for themselves are not incontrovertible. This is especially clear

31 Atkinson, *The Burden of White Supremacy*.

32 For a discussion of migration, sovereignty, and international law see Vincent Chetail, “Sovereignty and Migration in the Doctrine of the Law of Nations: An Intellectual History of Hospitality from Vitoria to Vattel”, *The European Journal of International Law* 27, no. 4 (2016): 901–922; for a useful summary of the Japanese position in 1924 see “The Problem of Japanese Immigration: I--The Views of Johnson, Hanihara, Hughes”, *Outlook*, April 16, 1924, 639. For the activities of the Ghadar Party see Sohi, *Echoes of Mutiny*.

33 Ngai, *Impossible Subjects*, 12.

in the US–Canada Pacific borderlands, a space in which empires, nations, states, provinces, colonies, cities, and small towns asserted sometimes-competing sovereign claims over a disparate and multiethnic array of citizens, subjects, migrants, and sojourners.





Chapter 4

An Ocean-Bound Borderland and Japanese Immigrant Hotels in Honolulu, 1888–1908

Yukari Takai

In December 1906, Matsubara Kazuo, the acting secretary of the Japanese General Consulate in Honolulu, alerted Tokyo that nearly all recent Japanese arrivals had informed officials of their intent to make their way to the mainland. Many indicated that they would leave immediately for destinations such as Seattle and San Francisco, while others said they would do so after working on the sugar plantations of O‘ahu, earning money to pay for their passage. In all cases, Matsubara concluded, *issei* (first-generation Japanese immigrant) labourers viewed Hawai‘i as a way station rather than a final destination.¹

This transformation of the spatial relationship between Hawai‘i and Japanese migration suggests that Hawai‘i had emerged as a sea-bound borderland during the turn of the 20th century, serving as a space that connected the places of origin of Japanese migrants to continental destinations in the United States and Canada. Put another way, Hawai‘i solidified

1 Mtatsubara Kazuo to Katō Takaaki, confidential no. 7, February 22, 1906, “Hawai nihonjin imin no beihondo tenkō bōshisaku rinshin no ken” in Gaimushō (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan), *Nihon gaikō bunsho*, Meiji 39, no. 2 (1906) (Tokyo: Nihon rengō kyōkai, 1959): 311.

its role in what I would call an ocean-bound borderland, which served as a liminal space for Japanese migrants between their homeland and their intended destinations. This migration, or transmigration,² of tens of thousands of *issei* workers to, through, and from Hawai'i raised concern among Japanese diplomats abroad, Ministry of Foreign Affairs officials in Japan, and American and Canadian authorities.

For almost thirty years, scholars of borderland history, transnational history, and ethnic and racial minorities have emphasized the need for a new analytical framework that goes beyond the confinement of nation-states.³ This chapter

- 2 Linda Basch, Nina Glick Schiller, and Cristina Szanton Blanc, *Nations Unbound: Transnational Projects, Postcolonial Predicaments, and Deterritorialized Nation States* (Langhorne, PA: Gordon and Breach, 1994).
- 3 For criticism of the lack of transnational perspectives in US history and American exceptionalism, see Ian Tyrell, "American Exceptionalism in an Age of International History", *American History Review* 96, no. 4 (1991): 1031–55; David Thelen, "The Nation and Beyond: Transnational Perspectives on United States History", *The Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1995): 965–975; Thomas Bender, ed., *Rethinking American History in a Global Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002); Donna R. Gabaccia, "Liberty, Coercion, and the Making of Immigrant Historians", *Journal of American History* 84 (September 1997): 570–575; Donna R. Gabaccia, "Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations, and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History", *Journal of American History* 86 (December 1999): 1115–1134. For discussion of transnational history in Québec history, see Aline Charles and Thomas Wien, "Le Québec entre histoire connectée et histoire transnationale", *Globe* 14, no. 2 (2012): 199–221. For English Canadian history, New Zealand history and transnational history, see Katie Pickles, "Transnational Intensions and Cultural Cringe: History Beyond National Boundaries", in Christopher Dummitt and Michael Dawson, eds., *Contesting Clio's Craft: New Directions and Debates in Canadian History* (London: Institute for the Study of the Americas, University of London, 2009), 141–161. For transnational perspectives in Asian American history, see Sucheng Chan, "European and Asian Immigration into the United States in Comparative Perspective, 1820s to 1920s", in Virginia Yans-McLaughlin, ed., *Immigration Reconsidered: History, Sociology, and Politics* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 37–75; Erika Lee, "Hemispheric Orientalism and the 1907 Pacific Coast Race Riots", *Amerasia Journal* 33, no. 2 (2007): 19–47; Erika Lee, "Orientalisms in the Americas: A Hemispheric Approach to Asian American History", *Journal of Asian American Studies* 8,





uses a borderlands approach to narrate a history of Japanese transpacific migration. It moves Hawai'i and the surrounding Pacific Ocean from a peripheral position to a more central place in the examination of global movements of people, goods, capital, and ideas. The focus is on the migration of *tenkō imin*—as they were referred to by Japanese diplomats and the immigrant press—who left Japan for Hawai'i and who, after a period ranging from a few days to several years, sailed to the mainland.

In previous work, I have underlined the significant role that transpacific steamships played in the step migration of *issei* workers from Japan to Hawai'i and then to the continental United States and Canada.⁴ In doing so, I have furthered the shift in the analytical focus of existing studies from nation-states and migrants to the middlemen who played important roles in this and other migrations. In this essay, I will examine the role of the keepers of Japanese immigrant inns, hotels, and boarding houses in Honolulu in facilitating the flow of Japanese labourers from Hawai'i to continental North America. These actors reshaped Hawai'i into a nodal point for the transpacific movement of Japanese migrants and accelerated the development of an ocean-bound borderland with Hawai'i at the centre.

From Japan to Hawai'i and to the North American Continent

The Japanese were among hundreds of thousands of multiethnic and multinational labourers from Asia, Europe, the Americas, and the Atlantic islands—such as Madeira—who migrated across the Pacific to work on the sugar cane fields of Hawai'i. Sugar had been the source of economic and political power on the island chain since the mid-1840s, and the planters needed cheap labour to ensure the functioning

no. 3 (2005): 235–256; Eiichiro Azuma, *In Search of Our Frontier: Japanese America and Settler Colonialism in the Construction of Japan's Borderless Empire* (Berkeley, CA : University of California Press, 2019).

4 Yukari Takai, "Navigating Transpacific Passages: Steamship Companies, State Regulators, and Transshipment of Japanese in the Early-Twentieth-Century Pacific Northwest", *Journal of American Ethnic History* 30, no. 3 (2011): 7–34

of the plantation system.⁵ In 1884, the Imperial Japanese government approved the plantation owners' request to hire Japanese labourers. The following year, the first contingent of 945 government-contract workers, under a form of indentured labour, arrived in Hawai'i.

Kan'yaku imin, or government-sponsored immigrants, were bound to work for three years on the islands' sugar plantations. In 1888, the first arrivals of *kan'yaku imin* completed the terms of their contracts.⁶ At this point, these labourers could choose between three options: they could stay in Hawai'i, return to Japan, or move on to the continental United States or Canada.⁷ Initially, a handful of Japanese labourers left for the continent, but by 1902 the number of Japanese departures from Hawai'i began to increase significantly. No statistics are available for 1901, but in 1902, 1,381 men and women departed from the islands, and in 1906, the peak year of Japanese migration from Hawai'i to the continental United States, more than 10,000 Hawaiian-Japanese labourers left the islands for the continent. Between 1902 and 1907, almost 40,000 Japanese left for the mainland.⁸ A number of factors such as promises of higher wages, abundant jobs, and

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- 5 Gary Y. Okihiko, *Pineapple Culture: A History of the Tropical and Temperate Zones* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 117–118.
 - 6 Hiroshima ken, ed., *Hiroshima Ijyūshi; Tsūshi hen* (Tokyo, Dai-ichi hōki shyūppan, 1991–1993), 135; Kimura Kenji, "Kindai nihon imin ni okeru kokka to minshū: Imin hogohōka no hokubei hondo tenkō wo chūshin ni", *Rekishigaku kenkyū* no. 582 (July 1988): 23–32.
 - 7 The continental United States was the main attraction for Hawaiian Japanese from 1899, when Hawai'i was annexed to the United States, to 1907, when President Roosevelt's executive order banned Japanese migration from Hawai'i. Canada became an option for a growing number of Hawaiian Japanese who looked to move to the North American continent, especially after 1907.
 - 8 Available statistics do not show how many of 40,000 were freshly from Japan and how many were "seasoned" Japanese labourers in Hawai'i. Irie Toraji, *Hōjin kaigai hattenshi*, 448–450; Hiroshima ken, *Hiroshima Ijyūshi*, 135. See also from Saitō to Komura, June 22, 1905, January 24, 1907, Japanese American Research Project (hereafter, referred to as JARP), Japanese Foreign Ministry Archival Documents (hereafter, referred to as JFMAD), reel 12. Cited in Yuji Ichioka, *The Issei: The World of the First Generation Japanese Immigrants, 1885-1924* (New York: The Free Press, 1988), 51–52, 64–65. Kimura, "Kindai nihon", 28.





changes in the Japanese government's emigration policies encouraged migration from Hawai'i to the continent.⁹

In June 1902, Tokyo lifted its two-year ban on labour migration to the continental US and Canada, allowing former immigrants, including labourers who had lived in the United States, to move to North America.¹⁰ At the same time, the Japanese Imperial government, concerned with the rising tide of anti-Japanese sentiment in the continental United States and Canada, stopped the issuance of passports to emigrants, except for a small number of former residents, wives, and family members of US residents. This made it virtually impossible for Japanese labourers to obtain passports. Many then sought admission illegally. Some falsely posed as students or businessmen, two categories exempted from the ban. Many opted to leave from Hawai'i.¹¹

The fever for the stepwise transpacific migration of Japanese to the continental United States via Hawai'i remained at its apex until March 1907. After this date, the mounting racial discontent among white residents of the United States Pacific Coast led to an executive order banning the admission of Japanese and Korean labourers, except for those who travelled directly from their country of birth. With Executive Order 589, President Roosevelt intended to quell the diplomatic entanglement over the issue of the segregation

9 In 1902, Hawaiian plantation workers earned sixty-two cents US a day while railroad construction workers in Montana or Nevada were paid up to one dollar and fifty cents US daily. Hiroshima ken, *Hiroshima iijūshi*, 132; Gaimushō, Bureau of Trade, *Beikoku imin chōsa iinkai hōkokusho* 11, no. 7 (1913), *Hawai imin beikoku tenkō kinshi ikken*, 3-8-2-168, June 3, 1902. Cited in Kimura, "Kindai nihon", 29. An exchange rate for one hundred yen was 49.85 dollars in 1902 and 49.50 dollars in 1908. See also Ichioka, *Issei*, 65.

10 Yuji Ichioka, "Japanese Immigrant Labor Contractors and the Northern Pacific and the Great Northern Railroad Companies, 1898-1907", *Labor History*, 21 (1980): 325-350.

11 Approximately 30,000 Japanese labourers travelled from Japan to the Hawaiian Islands from 1885 to 1900 and 120,000 more did so from 1900 to 1907. In contrast, only a little over 5,100 labourers went directly to the continental United States from 1900 to 1907. Ichioka, *The Issei*, 64-65; Eiichiro Azuma, *Between Two Empires: Race, History and Transnationalism in Japanese America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 29.

of Japanese, Chinese, and Korean pupils in Oriental schools in San Francisco following the city's board of education resolution, which had placed Asian pupils in separate schools a year earlier. In 1907 and 1908, the so-called Gentlemen's Agreements between the United States and Japan virtually ended this migration of labourers to the continental United States altogether.

This closing of America's door did not mean the end of transmigration as *issei* labourers in Hawai'i quickly devised new entry routes, choosing to depart for Vancouver and Victoria instead of San Francisco and Seattle. In response, the Canadian government passed exclusionary regulations in 1908, such as those existing in the US. At this time Canada signed an agreement with Japan that set an annual quota of 400 Japanese labour migrants. That same year, the Canadian government issued the Continuous Journey regulation (R.S., c. 93, s. 30 amended, 10th April 1908), which banned entry to Canada for immigrants who had not arrived directly from their country of birth or citizenship.¹² Both American and Canadian actions were intended to stop the transmigration of Japanese to their respective countries. Like Roosevelt's Executive Order that was motivated by the fear of the "yellow peril,"¹³ Canada's Continuous Journey regulation was spurred largely by racial fear among white residents in British Columbia.¹⁴

12 "Continuous Journey Regulation, 1908", Canadian Museum of Immigration at Pier 21, accessed 3 October 2017. An Act to Amend the Immigration Act of 1906, Assented to 10th April, 1908. <https://www.pier21.ca/research/immigration-history/continuous-journey-regulation-1908>.

13 For greater discussion on the fear of "yellow peril", see Erika Lee, "The 'Yellow Peril' and Asian Exclusion in the Americas", *Pacific Historical Review* 76, no. 4 (2007): 537–557; Takai, "Navigating Transpacific Passages", 15–17.

14 The reports on "Oriental labourers" that William Lyon Mackenzie King, Deputy Minister of Labour at the time and the longest serving Prime Minister later, was commissioned to write probably best illustrates the extent of the concern that the Canadian government had towards the transmigration of Japanese labourers arriving on the Canadian shore. In King's view, the sudden increase of Japanese in large numbers on the Canadian Pacific Coast, was the direct cause of the race riots. He also concluded that the labour contracting companies were partly responsible for the riots. Canada, Royal Commission, *Report by W.L. Mackenzie King, C. M. G. Commissioner Appointed to Enquire into the Methods by*



Japanese Immigrant Hotels

As emigration companies, agents, and labour contractors came under the tightening scrutiny of Japanese, Canadian, and American governments, Japanese-owned inns, hotels, and boarding houses in Honolulu, like those on the West Coast, were able to partly fend off the attempts by the three national governments to rein in their business practices. In doing so, Japanese hotels in Honolulu consolidated the transformation of Hawai'i into a nodal point for multiple flows of Japanese migration. Hawai'i became a hub in a transpacific network, which linked Japanese villages and towns of *issei* men and women to their destinations in North America.

Like their counterparts in San Francisco, Seattle, Vancouver, and Victoria, owners and keepers of Japanese immigrant hotels in Honolulu were mostly immigrant men themselves who had risen above their later arriving compatriots.¹⁵ They kept close ties with their villages and prefectures of origin in Japan, leveraging this to their advantage. Hotel guides and advertisements were all in Japanese, and some included the owner's street address back in Japan as well as his business address in Honolulu. Evidently, this was a practice that emphasized links between business owners and their places of origin. For example, a Japanese-language pamphlet for *Yamaichi ryokan*, or Yamaichi Hotel, printed the owner Matsuda Inoshichi's name. Next to it were the names of three staff members and what is presumed to be their native hamlets, all in Hiroshima: Oda Tōtarō from Arima village in the county of Ashina, Kuratsu Sadao from Nishihara village in the county of Asa, and Wada Rentarō from Shin'ichi village in the county of Ashina.¹⁶ By displaying such information, Matsuda likely sought to attract his fellow countrymen on the basis of shared local origin, familiar dialect, and networks of kin and co-villagers. This strategy was practiced by many hotelkeepers, not just those who hailed from leading home prefectures in southwestern Japan, such as Yamaguchi, Hiroshima, and Kumamoto, but also by others who came

Which Oriental Labourers Have Been Induced to Come to Canada (Ottawa: The Commissioner, 1907).

15 For a discussion of boarding house proprietors and their associations in San Francisco, Los Angeles and Honolulu, see Ichioka, *The Issei*, 65.

16 Hawai ni okeru imin kankei zakken, vol. 3, 3-8-2-41, JFMAD.

from prefectures with smaller numbers of emigrants, such as Fukuoka.¹⁷ This tactic of catering to a specific village or region of origin was not unique to the Japanese, nor did Japanese immigrant hotel owners like Matsuda capitalize solely on *ken* (prefecture), *gun* (county), or *muara* (village) connections and regional networks.¹⁸ These hoteliers were also eager to service clients from outside the proprietor's prefecture of origin. Nevertheless, local, regional, and prefectural ties remained strong and were often essential to the success of their businesses.

Japanese hotels offered a wide range of services that went far beyond simply providing new arrivals with a place to stay. For example, immigrant hotels often sold tickets on behalf of transpacific steamship companies in return for commissions they received from these sales.¹⁹ The advertisements that Japanese hotels placed in the Japanese language newspapers of Honolulu provide us with some understanding of their role as sales agents. One instance was the daily advertisements carried by Hawaiian Japanese papers for the *Meiji-ya* Hotel on Beretania Street in Honolulu, co-owned by Hiroshima and Yamaguchi expatriates. The ads promised a "huge discount" for continent-bound steamship travelers

17 From Matsubara to Hayashi, confidential no. 22, November 6, 1906, Gaimushō, *Nihon gaikō bunsho* (1906), 303–306. Iida Kōjirō, *Honolulu no nikkeijin no rekishi chiri* (Kyoto: Nakanishiya Shuppan, 2013), 127–132.

18 For example, Italians also valued networks of family, kin, and co-villagers across the Atlantic and similarly profited from the extended webs of human relations. Robert Harney, "Men without Women" in Betty Boyd Caroli, Robert F. Harney, and Lydio F. Tomasi, eds., *The Italian Immigrant Women in North America* (Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1977), 79–102. For a critical assessment of earlier discussion of boarding houses and on their double-edged nature as a place of exploitation and servitude for women, see Nancy M. Forestell, "Bachelors, Boarding-Houses, and Blind Pigs: Gender Construction in a Multi-Ethnic Mining Camp, 1909–1920", in Franca Iacovetta with Paula Draper and Robert Bentesca, eds., *A Nation of Immigrants: Women, Workers, and Communities in Canadian History, 1840s–1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998), 251–290, especially 259–263.

19 Canada, Royal Commission, *Report of the Royal Commission on Chinese and Japanese Immigration*. Session 1902. Sessional Paper, no. 54, 1902 (Ottawa: Printed by S.E. Dawson, Printer to the King's Most excellent Majesty, 1902), 331.



and accommodations for “various sorts of requests”. The proposed cut rate was a result of the discount that steamship companies offered to the Honolulu Japanese Hotel Keepers Association, which sold tickets to the groups of labourers they recruited.²⁰ At times, the Japanese Hotel Keepers Association in Honolulu even chartered ships to transport Hawaiian Japanese to cities such as Seattle, San Francisco or Vancouver.²¹

Some Japanese hotels recruited continent-bound labourers immediately upon their arrival in Hawai’i and then shipped them to the American or Canadian Pacific coast. In doing so, they acted as local agents for mainland labour-recruiting companies. Hotelkeepers who did this earned a commission in accordance with the number of workers they successfully recruited and transported. This line of business depended on the connections Honolulu hotelkeepers had with emigration companies in Japan and labour contractors based in Seattle, San Francisco, Vancouver, or other continental locations. However, as competition among these middlemen intensified, some contractors on the continent began to send their own agents to Honolulu. Others made arrangements directly with shipping companies for the transportation of recruited labourers.²² In order to secure more workers willing to move to the continent, one Honolulu hotel started to pay a

20 In San Francisco, the Boardinghouse Keepers Association entered into an agreement with the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, which gave a cut rate to groups of labourers whom the association shipped from Honolulu to San Francisco. The San Francisco association then sent recruiters to Hawai’i who promoted the higher wages and abundant jobs debate on the West Coast. It also emphasized that workers could escape the brutality of the plantation managers (lunas) who roamed the sugar cane fields on horseback. The lunas were equipped with a whip in hand and yelled at, beat, or simply fired field workers who they consider to be lazy. Ichioka, *The Issei*, 65; from Saitō Miki to Komura, May 28, 1902, enclosure, Alex., Centre to H. Hackfield and Co., n.d., JARP, JFMAD, reel 12.

21 From Saitō to Chinda, public no. 54, April 2, 1903, “Tenkō torishimari saku toshite beikoku tokō imin kaikin kata rinshin no ken”, Gaimushō, *Nihon gaikō bunsho* (1906), 556–559; Patricia Roy, *A White Man’s Province: British Columbia Politicians and Chinese and Japanese Immigrants, 1858–1914* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1989), 206–207.

22 Ichioka, *The Issei*, 69.

Japanese emigration company one yen for each worker that it sent to Hawai'i.²³ If the worker agreed to move on to the continent upon his landing in Honolulu, the Honolulu hotel paid an additional sum to the Japanese emigration company. In return, the hotel received fees from continental employers or contractors for each worker they sent.

In addition to the recruitment function, Japanese immigrant hotels charged fees for the assistance they provided to immigrants who lacked language skills or were unfamiliar with the official documents they needed to complete in order to make their move. The Japanese Hotel Keepers Association in Honolulu hired lawyers (*tsūben*) to defend immigrants who experienced difficulties with US port authorities. In one case, a lawyer claimed that immigrants were free to go wherever they pleased within the United States once admitted to Hawai'i. It was entirely up to the *issei* workers, the lawyer argued, to decide whether to accept or decline a job offered by the planters, to stay at a Japanese hotel in the city, or to immediately move on to the mainland United States. He also asserted that any denial of this privilege was a "violation of human rights". This argument did not impress Japanese Consul General Saitō Miki, who disdainfully referred to "dishonest lawyers" in correspondence to an official back home.²⁴

At times, Japanese hotelkeepers in Honolulu helped immigrants navigate bureaucratic hurdles and fill out American and Japanese government forms.²⁵ For example, if a resident immigrant worker decided to send for his wife and children in Japan, the hotelkeeper, for a fee, would fill out the necessary forms and submit them to the local consulate on the immigrant's behalf so that he would be issued the

23 From Saitō to Hayashi Minister of Foreign Affairs, confidential no. 22, November 6, 1906, Gaimushō, *Nihon gaikō bunsho* (1906), 303.

24 From Chinda to Premiers of Nagasaki, Hyogo and Kanagawa Prefectures, "Hawai yuki nihon imin no beihondo tenkō shisa torishimari kata no ken", November 24, 1906, Gaimushō, *Nihon gaikō bunsho* (1906), 318–319; from Saitō to Hayashi, confidential no. 22, November 6, 1906, Gaimushō, *Nihon gaikō bunsho* (1906), 303–304.

25 By 1907, Hawaiian sugar planters requested collaboration from Japanese hotels for the recruitment of cane field workers. This point will be discussed later in the essay.



required certificate. This was another valuable service, as many immigrants were illiterate and lacked the time or skill to complete such documents.

The range of services that Japanese immigrant inns and hotels in Honolulu offered to their clientele established them firmly within the local and transnational networks upon which the *issei* immigrants relied. The inns and hotels provided links to steamship companies, labour contractors, or the Japanese consulate, and at times even helped *issei* circumvent the regulations imposed by the Japanese Foreign Ministry. Some of these services ran counter to the policies being pursued by Japanese diplomats on behalf of their government and were contrary to the interests of Hawaiian sugar planters.

Blaming the “Evil Practice”

Japanese diplomats blamed the hotelkeepers in Honolulu and San Francisco for the “evil practice”, which, in their view, led to the deterioration of the racial climate on the Pacific coast of the United States and Canada.²⁶ The reaction of the diplomats was hardly surprising, given the extent to which Japanese hotel and innkeepers were central in the out-migration of Japanese from Hawai‘i, as well as the discordant interests between the diplomatic corps and the hotelkeepers. Consul General Saitō of Honolulu felt that the Japanese hotel owners in his city—together with the recruiters of Japanese labourers in Japan and the labour agents sent by contractors in North America—were key culprits in fanning the “fever of trans(pacific) migration”, or *tenkō netsu*, among the Japanese in Hawai‘i.²⁷

This resulted in Saitō and his staff taking measures to discourage this migration. In January 1906, Saitō convened a meeting with the Japanese Hotel Keepers Association in Honolulu and asked them to stop assisting in the recruitment of Japanese workers for the Pacific coast of North America.

26 Lee, “Hemispheric Orientalism”:19–48; John Price, “‘Orienting’ the Empire: Mackenzie King and the Aftermath of the 1907 Race Riot”, *BC Studies* 156/157 (Winter 2007/Spring 2008): 53–81.

27 From Saitō to Chinda, public no. 54, April 2, 1903, “Tenkō torishimari saku toshite beikoku tokō imin kaikin kata rinshin no ken”, Gaimushō, *Nihon gaikō bunsho* (1906), 556–559.

In particular, he demanded that they discontinue selling steamship tickets to outbound *issei* labourers and halt the arrangement of jobs on the continent. However, the effectiveness of his efforts was somewhat limited. The Japanese hotel owners appeared to have agreed with the consul's request as arrivals to Honolulu, following the meeting, avoided staying at Japanese hotels in the city. However, these migrants did so in order to reduce the risk of being caught or lessen the suspicion that they were preparing for their next trip to the continent. Many worked briefly on plantations outside the city or simply kept out of sight before eventually boarding a steamship to the mainland. Others arranged to leave from an outer island in the archipelago.²⁸

Saitō also launched a campaign to dissuade migrants from believing that wages were much higher in continental destinations. According to his statistics, an orchard worker in California worked on average 210 days a year, which amounted to just 17.5 days per month. In contrast, a plantation labourer in Hawai'i worked all year round, which made their yearly earnings on par with their compatriots in California. Moreover, he argued, a departing labourer from Hawai'i had to pay thirty dollars for steamship transportation and five dollars for brokerage fees.²⁹ All things considered, the Japanese consul openly doubted the advantages of work on the mainland and opposed the act of transmigration for the continent. However, his efforts bore little success as ship after ship of Japanese labourers and transients continued to leave the islands. Ultimately, all attempts by the Japanese diplomats were ineffective.

The Hawaiian sugar planters also struggled in vain to stop the departure of Japanese labourers. They "kept" or took away

28 Labour recruiters on the continent worked closely with hotelkeepers in Hawai'i in order to propel outmigration of Japanese labourers to the continental destinations. As discussed earlier, some hotel owners received fees for each worker they sent to the continent from an employer or a contractor on the continent in need of Japanese labourers. From Saitō Miki to Viscount Hayashi Tadashi, "Hawai tokō honpō imin no genkyō hōkoku no ken", *Nihon gaikō bunsho* (1906), 295–296; From Saitō Miki to Viscount Hayashi Tadashi, "Hawai ni okeru honpō imin raiō meisaiشو shintatsu no ken", public no. 207, December 13, 1906, Gaimushō, *Nihon gaikō bunsho* (1906), 308.

29 *Ibid.*

workers' passports, sent appeals to the Japanese consul general, circulated advice against leaving, and even offered a bonus to workers who stayed.³⁰ In one case, they attempted to block the shipment of plantation workers to the continent on the S.S. *Olympia* by taking Kanjō Hotel owner Haga Kusaka to court.³¹ However, they refused to raise wages, citing either the decreasing price of sugar or the elevated cost of operations when sugar prices were high. In 1905, the sugar oligarchy that had dominated the islands economically and politically for nearly half a century³² pressured the Hawaiian Legislature to make it more costly for recruiters and contractors to ship labourers to the continent. The pressure culminated in the enactment of Act 67 that year, which required all contractors, recruiters, and their agents to pay a license fee of five hundred dollars. The new law prevented some Japanese hotel owners from sending recruiters to plantations in Oahu or the outer islands. However, others, including the owner of *Kanjyō Ryokan*, simply paid the required fees, obtained the necessary permit, and continued to sell steamship tickets to the continent.³³

Ultimately, it became clear that the Hawaiian planters, like the Japanese diplomats, were powerless to stop the recruitment practices of the Japanese immigrant hotels. In 1906, in what the

30 Okihiro, *Cane Fires*, 36, 37. Morita, *Hawai nihonjin hattenshi*, 149–150.

31 From Matsubara to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Saionji Kinmochi, "Zaihawai nihonjin wo beihondo ni sasoidashi no tame rinjisen raihu no ken", March 13, 1906, public no. 60, *Nihon gaikō bunsho* (1906), 314. See also Ichioka, *The Issei*, 66; Kornel S. Chang, *Pacific Connections: The Making of the US-Canadian Borderlands* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), 75–76.

32 Okihiro, *Pineapple Culture*, 116–117; Rob Perez, "Big 5 Companies Were All-Powerful", *Star-Bulletin*, 25 (October 1999).

33 From Matsubara to Ministry of Foreign Affairs Saionji Kinmochi, "Zaihawai nihonjin wo beihondo ni sasoidashi", 314. Morita, *Hawai nihonjin hattenshi*, 150–151. On one occasion, planters successfully resorted to legal action and sued Japanese hotel owners for the infringement of the US Immigration Act. The Act stipulated that to assist or encourage the importation or migration of any alien by promise of employment in any foreign country was to be considered a violation of the said act of February 26, 1885. The Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs then intervened promptly and instructed immigrant hotel proprietors to refrain from such practices bordering on illegality.

Honolulu Consul General described as an "ironic and absurd" turn of events, the Hawaiian Sugar Planters' Association requested that the city's Japanese hotel owners help recruit suitable migrant labourers for work in the sugar cane fields. The planters had asked the Hotel Keepers Association for advice in identifying those fit for work on the plantations among recent arrivals. In return, the Planters' Association promised to pay commissions to the Hotel Keepers Association, which, in the word of the planters, would offer them an "unexpected profit" of three hundred and fifty dollars.³⁴ What prompted such a change of attitude among planters is not entirely clear, but it is possible that there was an understanding among diplomats and planters that the departure of Japanese labourers from the islands was irreversible and that a growing labour crisis on the plantations called for a quick change in approach. With a sense of irony, exaggeration, or resignation, Saitō went on to predict the establishment of a Japanese Hotel Keepers Association branch office in Japan for direct recruitment of Japanese farmers for the Hawaiian plantations. In his cynical words, Japanese migration to Hawai'i might ultimately become the exclusive initiative of the Honolulu Japanese Hotel Keepers Association.³⁵

Conclusion

This chapter highlights the vital role that Japanese immigrant hotels played in orchestrating the transpacific movement of Japanese migrants via Hawai'i. These hotels were instrumental in the transformation of Hawai'i into a crucial nodal point in the emerging ocean-bound borderland for continental-bound *issei* workers in Hawai'i. Immigrant hotels offered a wide range of services: they sold reduced-rate steamship tickets, loaned money for their purchase, and, in cooperation with labour contractors on the continent, recruited workers for railroad companies, sawmills, mining companies, and farm owners in California, Oregon, Montana, British Columbia, and

34 From Saitō Miki to Hayashi Tadashi, November 6, 1906, Confidential no. 22, *Hawai ni okeru imin kankei zakken*, vol. 3, 3-8-2-41, JFMAD; from Saitō Miki to Hayashi Tadashi, "Hawai tokō honpō imin no genkyō hōkoku no ken", public no. 163, September 20, 1906, *Gaimushō, Nihon gaikō bunsho* (1906), 295–296.

35 *Ibid.*



even further inland. At times, they defied the admonitions of the Honolulu consul and, by extension, the directives of the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Occasionally, they even defended the rights of some *issei* migrants against actions by US immigration officials. Ultimately, the role of the Japanese hotels in facilitating the transmigration of Japanese labourers clashed with the resolve of nation-states—Japan, the United States, and Canada—to curb the mobility of citizens and foreigners alike.

This chapter also illustrates how the transpacific migration of the Japanese at times undermined the sovereign power of nation-states and, at other times, strengthened it. The American, Canadian, and Japanese governments each sought to quell the tide of this labour migration via Hawai'i at the turn of the century. In lockstep with the US government—which signed the Gentlemen's Agreements with the Japanese government and unilaterally issued the executive order—the Canadian government enacted the Continuous Journey Clause, banning Japanese migration from Hawai'i and targeting South Asian migration. Increasingly, antagonistic reactions to Japanese arrivals at continental ports stemmed in part from what North American policymakers and white residents viewed as a clear sign of the reification of a Japanese invasion on the Pacific Coast, and in part from the concomitant apprehension among Japanese diplomats and officials about the deteriorating racial climate against Japanese immigrants in Canada and the United States.

But, as this essay shows, the efforts of Japanese diplomats remained largely ineffective. This was because Japanese hotel and innkeepers in Hawai'i, along with other non-migrant, non-state parties of migration such as steamship companies, incited *issei* workers to exploit loopholes in the exclusionary regulations that Canada and the United States implemented. It was also because Japanese diplomats and government officials in Hawai'i were in no position to impose their political will and limit the geographic movement of the immigrant workers. In these ways, Japanese transpacific migration challenged the power of nation-states, forcing Canada and the United States to sign agreements with Tokyo to reduce (the former) or halt (the latter) the Japanese labour migration.

The Hawaiian sea-bound borderland linked Japanese villages and towns to Hawai'i and to Pacific North American ports

such as Seattle, San Francisco, Vancouver, and Victoria. This borderland also provided a bridge for Japanese migration to further borderlands between Canada and the US, as a growing number of immigrants, Japanese and otherwise, destined for Vancouver and Victoria in 1907 and early 1908 crossed the national boundary into the United States.³⁶ Further exploration of connections between the two borderlands for Japanese and other immigrant labourers opens the door for new research.

36 Takai, "Navigating Transpacific Passages": 10–11; Takai, "Asian Migrants, Exclusionary Laws, and Transborder Migration in North America, 1880-1940", *The OAH Magazine of History* 23 (October 2009): 35–42; Takai, "These Japanese Continuously Violated the Alien-Contract Labour Laws: The Gendered Paths of Labourers, Farmers and Housewives from Japan Traversing the Canada-US Border in the Early Twentieth Century", *Histoire sociale/Social History* 80 (November 2007): 297–322. According to a report by W. L. Mackenzie King, Japanese immigration to the United States through the ports of Vancouver and Victoria numbered 12,635 in 1900 alone. In the ten months from January to October 1907, the peak year of the cross-border migration of Japanese, over 8,000 issei men and women landed in Canada and of them, close to a half (3,619) held passports to the United States issued by the Japanese government. Only one-fifth (1,641) travelled directly from Japan. More than one third (2,779) came from Hawai'i. Royal Commission, *Report of W.L. Mackenzie King*, 9–11.





Chapter 5

Indigenous Peoples and Border-Making in 19th- Century North America: Comparative Case Studies

Ana Lilia Nieto Camacho,
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This chapter uses two case studies drawn from very distinct borderlands—Mexico’s north and the north-eastern Great Plains between 1830 and 1885—to investigate the dense networks of relations forged out of interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. It compares the roles Apaches and Comanches (along with Mexican and American nationals) played in the traffic of livestock across the US–Mexico border with those that Métis and First Nations played in shaping the fur and provisions trade on the northeastern Plains. This comparison reveals the shared interests among officials in Mexico, the United States, and the British Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) in formalizing their territorial claims over these distinct parts of the North American west, as well as how they ran up against the pre-existing claims of Indigenous peoples. These cases offer insights into the confrontations derived from two radically different ways of understanding territory and the establishment of political boundaries as social and historical

constructs.¹ They illustrate the repercussions of marking and enforcing political borders in social spaces previously structured around different socioeconomic, cultural, and political interests; these interests frequently clashed with those of national states and their local representatives.

By taking the social, political, and economic practices of Indigenous peoples as their starting point, these case studies allow us to consider the very idea of borders and the construction of the nation-state as historical processes, rather than given or fixed historical references. A closer look at borderland relations beginning at the 19th century's mid-point reveals the varied roles Indigenous peoples played on these two borders. In the south, establishing the US–Mexico border at the conclusion of the US–Mexico War in 1848 modified national territories, which required state efforts to consolidate the new boundary and reorganize the socioeconomic links and ties that had become transnational. In northern Mexico, national governments, local authorities, and nomadic and sedentary residents on either side of the Rio Grande congregated around everyday activities ranging from political disputes and shared business enterprises to breaches of contract and armed confrontation. Likewise, in the north, the fur and provisions trade produced a dense and shifting network of economic ties among the region's Indigenous peoples that spanned the international boundary along the 49th parallel and that, at once, depended on and ignored the jurisdictional differences marked by that boundary.

The nature, scope, and duration of these interactions spoke to histories of territorial use and occupation that predated and, indeed, challenged the goals of nation-states wishing to superimpose another territorial model over top of Indigenous homelands. Nineteenth-century jurists considered territory as constitutive of the state and viewed "the property of being sedentary" as the absolute pre-condition for state-making.² In practice, this link was quite clear to national or imperial governments. The actions of Apaches, Comanches, Dakotas, and Métis—with their traditions of mobility and economies—

1 John Allen, Doreen Massey, and Allan Cochrane, *Rethinking the Region* (London: Routledge, 1998), 54.

2 Jorge Jellinek, *Teoría general del Estado* (México: Librería de Ángel Pol, 1935), 62, 152–153.



were based on exploiting the resources of a “changing but always determinable”³ territory, ignoring the fixed territorial limits desired by policymakers and private property owners alike.

Mobility was one characteristic of the societies and regional economies of the nineteenth century North American west, and the control of people became a geopolitical imperative for national states and imperial representatives. After all, political power and capitalist enterprises depended on the resources of the territory and individuals’ capacity for supervision and organization. Activities such as buffalo hunting or the organization of cattle raiding expeditions were governed by rules outside the state. Ignoring the right to impose conditions on communication between Mexicans and Comanches, Métis and Dakotas, or skirting the ban on the arms trade between allied groups denoted the existence of a parallel authority structure and social relations that prevented the task of creating conditions for the establishment of a lasting, effective “legal order”. The state viewed mobility and socioeconomic relationships established outside its territory as unacceptable since they threatened its very existence. In the Mexican case, Apache and Comanche actions were regarded as such a threat to the nation that limiting their mobility was a priority and became the focus of tough diplomatic negotiations between the US and Mexican governments throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. While governments did not always perceive mobile northern Plains peoples to pose the same threat as those in the south, they nonetheless understood the connections between Indigenous mobility and power—and sought to harness that mobility to their own ends.

Mexico-US: New Frontier, Known Problems

While the war between the US and Mexico (1846–1848) left vast territories under US jurisdiction, impacted populations on both sides of the border, and changed the interactions between independent Indigenous peoples, sedentary

3 Becerra Hernández, *Estado y territorio: en la teoría general, en el derecho colombiano y el derecho comparado* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, Instituto de Investigaciones Jurídicas, 1981), 54.

Indigenous communities, and Mexicans and Americans in northern Mexico and the American southwest, it nonetheless failed to put an end to the traffic of people and goods in the borderlands. Apaches, Comanches,⁴ and borderlanders on either side of the Rio Grande continued to make forays into the lands of the neighboring country, either to recover runaway slaves or stolen cattle, to loot and pillage, to avenge an offense, to take captives—whether Indians or borderlanders⁵—or to smuggle or simply lead their herds to pastures or water holes that had been bisected by "the line". Cattle rustling, involving all groups, continued to operate and yield significant gains despite the border.

The growing number of settlers arriving in the American southwest since the 1820s had been facilitated by US state and federal authorities, who drove Indigenous populations from their lands. These displacements intensified relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous borderland peoples. In Texas, for example, interaction accelerated with Euro-American colonization beginning in 1821, the separation of Texas from Mexico in 1836, and its annexation to the American Union in 1845. At first, friendly trade relations existed between Americans, Apaches, and Comanches; conversely, Apaches attacked Mexicans from New Mexico and Arizona and stole their cattle to sell at ranches in Texas or to settlers heading for California.⁶

The sparse population in northern Mexico was particularly vulnerable to such attacks. After the war, the population grew quickly on the American side, whereas, in northern Mexico, it increased in the northeast while growing far more

4 Contemporary documents and newspapers refer to Apaches and Comanches without identifying in any greater detail to which group they belonged. See Chantal Cramaussel, "La violencia en el estado de Chihuahua", *Violencia interétnica en la frontera norte novohispana y mexicana. Siglos XVII-XIX*. coord. José Marcos Medina Bustos y Esther Padilla Calderón, 195 -226. (Hermosillo: El Colegio de Sonora, 2015), 204. For the purposes of this essay, the terms "Indigenous people" or "Indians" (the English translation of "*indios*") are used as umbrella terms.

5 *Ibid.*, 216.

6 Robert Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West, 1846-1890* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 31-32.



slowly in north-central and northwest Mexico.⁷ Relations between Indigenous peoples, Creoles, and Euro-Americans were sometimes peaceful and sometimes hostile during the Spanish period and the decades immediately following Mexican independence. In the largely pastoral colonial society, cattle theft (committed secretly) or rustling (carried out violently, in broad daylight), though illegal, had neither the severity nor the economic importance it acquired during the second half of the nineteenth century. It involved large numbers of northerners⁸ and included Indigenous peoples, who transported stolen livestock to the United States without necessarily having to resort to violence. Rustling intensified with the arrival of Euro-American settlers in Texas and the growth of European migration to the southwestern United States in the 1820s. By 1835, the growing American presence led Comanches to begin their forays deep into Mexico.⁹ That year, an American detachment set up a supply fort near the Canadian River,¹⁰ where they began to trade firearms, ammunition, textiles, and liquor for cattle, horses, and mules.

A diplomatic controversy between Mexico City and Washington ensued because the cattle traded by the Comanche were stolen from Mexicans before being traded in full view of US troops.¹¹ Prior to then, looting had been sporadic and dictated by the nomads' needs, yet from 1835 onwards, it was motivated by profit and accentuated by the growing US presence. In addition, both periodic smallpox

7 Lance R. Blyth, *Chiricahua and Janos: Communities of Violence in the Southwestern Borderlands, 1680-1880* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012), IX.

8 Sara Orтели, *Trama de una guerra conveniente. Nueva Vizcaya y la sombra de los apaches (1748-1790)* (México: El Colegio de México, 2007), 182.

9 Luis Aboites Aguilar, "Poder político y 'bárbaros' en Chihuahua hacia 1845", *Secuencia* 19 (enero-abril 1991): 198.

10 In the present state of Oklahoma.

11 México, *Comisión Pesquisadora de la Frontera norte encargada de estudiar las reclamaciones por las invasiones de los indios bárbaros de los Estados Unidos de América. Informe de los trabajos realizados por esta comisión a cargo de los señores Ignacio Galindo, Antonio García Carrillo y Francisco Valdés* (México: 1873), Archivo Histórico de la Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores de México (hereafter AHSREM) caja 4.

epidemics¹² and the decline of the bison, which had formed the basis of their culture and livelihood, led the Apaches and Comanches to increase their attacks in Mexico.¹³

Cattle Rustling, Indian Raids, and Violence

Devastating Indian expeditions into the northern haciendas began in the 1830s.¹⁴ Brian DeLay notes that between 1831 and 1848, 2,649 Mexicans were killed and 852 taken captive by Comanches, while 702 Indians (Comanches and Kiowas) were put to death by Mexicans and 32 captured.¹⁵ The number of borderlanders killed or captured by Indigenous peoples, however, did not significantly decline after the war between Mexico and the United States. According to authorities in the small border town of Ojinaga, Chihuahua, the death toll from these raids in the period from October 23, 1849 to August 8, 1874 remained startlingly high: an estimated 36 Mexicans were killed by Indians and 19 Indians were killed by Mexicans. These statistics and the large number of expeditions reported during this period suggest a much longer history of cross-border raids than previously understood.¹⁶

12 Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 347–48.

13 Ana Lilia Nieto Camacho, *Defensa y política en la frontera norte de México 1848-1856* (México: El Colegio de la Frontera Norte, 2012), 37.

14 DeLay claims that the violence associated with the plunder of cattle began when the Comanches, Apaches, Navajos and other groups abandoned the peace treaties with Mexicans in the early 1830s. Brian DeLay, *War of a Thousand Deserts: Indian Raids and the US–Mexican War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), xv. Other authors point out that the most violent period of the war against the Apaches began in 1835. Cramaussel, "La violencia", 198–199; Cuauhtémoc Velasco Ávila, "Milicias en El Carrizal: Los hombres bravíos y el miedo a los indios, 1825-1836", *Historias* 87 (enero-abril, 2014): 67–70.

15 DeLay, *War*, 318.

16 The documentation reports a total of 35 Comanche and Apache Indian expeditions. The number of Mexican expeditions in pursuit of Indians was 24; most of these expeditions failed. "Noticia presentada por la Presidencia Municipal de Ojinaga Chihuahua a la Comisión Investigadora en los Estados de Sonora y Chihuahua" del 23 de octubre de 1849 a 8 agosto de 1874. Cuchillo Parado, 14 de noviembre de 1874, en *Comisión Investigadora en los Estados de Sonora y Chihuahua*, in AHSREM, caja 2, 20-9-1/14.



Despite the violence, peace and harmony were not entirely absent from the border region. Occasionally, residents on either side of the border went into business together. Indians and Americans, Mexicans and Indians, and even Americans and Mexicans often united against a common adversary or for a cause in a kind of “collaborative violence”.¹⁷ After 1848, Americans and Indigenous peoples joined forces to steal cattle from Mexican haciendas. There were also cases of partnerships between Indigenous peoples and Mexicans who looted American stockyards.¹⁸ This sort of plundering was often accompanied by murder.

The case of Sonora was paradigmatic. The introduction of firearms, the US invasion of Indian lands, and increasing competition for natural resources, horses, silver coins, arms, and supplies¹⁹ drove the Comanche raids deep into Mexico. Moreover, the growing demand for capitalist US markets profoundly transformed the Comanche political economy, making them increasingly reliant on these predatory expeditions.²⁰ While Indigenous peoples found cattle rustling and trading to be lucrative—necessary, even—the intensification of raiding caused many Mexicans to abandon their villages. Data on just two states, Chihuahua and Sonora, hint at the scope of the phenomenon: 40,707 animals were stolen between 1848 and 1883.²¹ Violence caused by Indian expeditions in seven states in the northern region of Mexico (Tamaulipas, Nuevo León, Coahuila, Texas, Chihuahua, and the states of Zacatecas and Durango) between early 1831 and April 1848, claimed the lives of 2,649 Mexicans, while 702 Comanches and Kiowas were killed by Mexicans.²² In comparison, between 1848 and 1883, 773 Mexicans and

17 Miguel Ángel González Quiroga, “Cooperative Violence on the Rio Grande Frontier (1830-1880)”, in Andrew Torget and Gerardo Gurza, eds., *These Ragged Edges: Histories of Violence along the U.S.-Mexico Border* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022)

18 Nieto, *Defensa y política*, 60.

19 DeLay, *War*, 88.

20 Joaquín Rivaya-Martínez, “A Different Look at Native American Depopulation: Comanche Raiding, Captive Taking, and Population Decline”, *Ethnohistory* 61, no. 3 (2014): 391–418, 394.

21 Cuadernos de pruebas de la Comisión Pesquisidora. We lack precise data to compare with previous years.

22 *Ibid.*, 318.

197 Indians were killed *in just two of the six border states*, suggesting that the high rate of violence persisted in the years following the US–Mexico War, although the violence shifted from northeast to northwest Mexico as settlement increased in the northeast.²³

The State, Citizens, and the Defense of the "National Border"

Although the Mexican government never effectively controlled the northern regions, the loss of territory after the war led it to make every effort to consolidate control over the northern regions it still retained. The issue was of great importance, largely because the ruling elite identified sovereignty with territory. Consequently, the movement of goods or people not controlled by the authorities (including filibustering expeditions involving American and French fortune-seekers who entered Northwestern Mexico in the 1850s to "free" regions that would later be annexed to the US) was considered a threat to national sovereignty. Livestock obtained from south of the Rio Grande was exchanged for weapons north of the border, which Apaches and Comanches would then use in their attacks on Mexicans. The authorities suspected that the alliance between Indians and Americans would lead to further territorial loss, a fear that was partly based on the limited state presence and control of the region. This situation continued until 1880, when Mexico consolidated its territorialization of the north, and Mexican authorities formed a common front with their US counterparts in preventing cross-border movement by Indigenous peoples.²⁴

The Mexican government did, in fact, attempt to strengthen its presence in the region and help residents who were suffering the effects of Apache and Comanche raids. Nevertheless, its efforts were negligible. Funds often failed to reach their destinations or plans fell through, as was the case with the project designed to establish military colonies between 1848

23 México, Ministerio de Relaciones Exteriores, Sección de América, Núm. 3, Año de 1874 in AHSREM, 20-9-1/14. Italics are ours.

24 Shelley Ann Bowen Hatfield, *Chasing Shadows. Indians along the United States–Mexico Border 1876–1911* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1998), 2.



and 1853. The lack of cooperation between the US military and civilian authorities, the scarcity of resources, the distance between Mexico City and the north, and the resistance of state governments to the assertion of federal authority undermined this project. In the end, the borderlanders took it upon themselves to defend the area.²⁵

In fact, the precarious federal presence in the north led state governments to take control over Indian policies. State governments formed civilian militias, trained regular forces, and exacted contributions to declare war against or sign peace treaties with the Comanche and Apache.²⁶ Despite its weakness, the federal government attached great importance to the Indian issue because of the need to establish state sovereignty in the frontier territories in the thirty years after the Mexican–American War.

Indians in Mexico—United States Bilateral Relations

The theft of livestock from both Mexico and the United States led to heated diplomatic exchanges and eventually pitted the two governments against each other.²⁷ Mexico's federal government was powerless to defend the border on the ground, although it proved more successful at the foreign policy level. Mexican authorities complained to Washington about the effects of Indian expeditions. For its part, the US government claimed that it was, in fact, Mexican Indians who were preying on borderland residents and accused Mexican borderlanders of absconding with cattle from American

25 See, for example, the information on Ojinaga, Chihuahua in note 16 above.

26 See the documents assembled by the Comisión Pesquisidora in AHSREM. Cf. Víctor Orozco, *Las guerras indias*, 245 y 203–257, 13–31.

27 In 1872, the American government set up the Robb Commission to investigate Texans' complaints of cattle theft, for which Texans blamed Mexicans. The Mexican government responded by launching its own inquiries. In 1875, it published its report, *Informe de la Comisión Pesquisidora de la Frontera* Cf. Marta Elena Negrete Salas, "La frontera texana y el abigeato 1848-1872", *Historia Mexicana*. 31, no. 1 (julio-septiembre 1981): 79–100.

ranches.²⁸ The issue of cross-border raids was so important that during the negotiation of peace terms at the end of the war with the United States, Mexico endeavoured to secure a US commitment to curb raids by the Indians and to prohibit any American from buying Mexican captives taken by the Indians, as well as purchasing horses, mules, livestock, or any other items stolen in Mexican territory. For some years, Mexican diplomats considered including such a clause—which was enshrined as Article XI of the war-ending Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo—as their singular diplomatic achievement.

In the years immediately following the treaty, Buchanan continued to believe that the United States could prevent Indian raids south of the Rio Grande, and Washington tried to honor the commitment by sending the army to the recently acquired territory and signing treaties with the Apache, Comanche, and Kiowa.²⁹ While Washington initially acknowledged its responsibility to contain the Indian raids and to compensate Mexico for the damage, the sheer size of the claims for damage (which exceeded 31 million dollars) caused American officials to seek to repeal the clause. The topic dominated correspondence between the Mexican envoy and the State Department. Beginning in August 1851, successive Secretaries of State³⁰ attempted to negotiate the repeal of Article XI. The ensuing negotiations lasted three years and were complicated by the interference of speculators and other diplomatic considerations.³¹ The

28 Hatfield, *Chasing Shadows*, 2. See: AHSREM, Colecciones: Artículo XI del Tratado de Guadalupe Hidalgo; Archivo de la Embajada de México en Estados Unidos de América (AEMEUA), tomo 11, 200 y 265 y Reclamaciones.

29 Paul Neff Garber, *The Gadsden Treaty* (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1959), 31.

30 The claims amounted to \$31 813 053.64 5/8. J. B. A. Moore, *Digest of International Arbitrations to which the United States has been Party*, 6 V. (Washington, 1898) II, 1306 in Garber, *The Gadsden Treaty*, 36.

31 Marcela Terrazas y Basante, *Inversiones, especulación y diplomacia. Las relaciones México-Estados Unidos durante la dictadura santannista* (México: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 2000); Marcela Terrazas y Basante, "James Gadsden", in Ana Rosa Suárez Argüello (coord.), *En el nombre del destino Manifiesto. Guía de ministros y embajadores de Estados Unidos en México 1825-1993*, (México: Instituto de investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora—Secretaría de Relaciones Exteriores, 1998), 88; Garber, *The Gadsden Treaty*, 85.



American and Mexican ministers eventually reached an arrangement on December 30, 1853, which repealed Article XI. Even so, the issue of Mexican claims generated by the article remained unsettled. Between 1856 and 1873, US and Mexican diplomats continued to argue over the financial terms of the agreement.³² Meanwhile, the issue of cross-border migrations continued to affect US–Mexico relations until 1882, when both countries signed an agreement to permit the reciprocal passage of troops to pursue Indians across national borders.³³

The Northwestern Plains: Exchanging Boundaries

To the north, the economic exchanges involving Indigenous peoples and outsiders were likewise critical to the elaboration of political boundaries, even as the nature of economic exchange in the two places differed significantly. In the late 18th and early 19th centuries, northern economies were largely organized around the exchange of animal furs, skins, and provisions such as dried meat. Such exchanges typically relied on the labour of Indigenous women and men and brought Europeans and Euro–North Americans into sustained contact with the Métis, Ojibwe, Dakota, and other Indigenous peoples in this portion of the continent. Conducted in Indigenous territories, these exchanges reflected Indigenous trade and/or political prerogatives as much those of their European or North American counterparts.

Fur trades drove the economic engines of American and British (as well as Canadian) expansion.³⁴ Indigenous geopolitics were therefore a key driver of economic relations with outsiders and helped define the borders between imperial claims. This was especially true in the northwest where, in the 1820s, trade rivalries animated the political divisions between British and US claims to the lands west of the Great Lakes. Following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, the HBC and its rival US companies courted Indigenous fur producers. Fur traders acting under the direction of US fur

32 Garber, *The Gadsden Treaty*, 175.

33 Hatfield, *Chasing Shadows*, 2.

34 Anne Hyde, *Empires, Nations & Families: A History of the North American West, 1800–1860* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2011), 19–20, ch. 1 passim.

companies established a string of posts along the Minnesota and Red rivers in the southern part of Rupert's Land, the vast territory claimed by the HBC.³⁵ For the HBC, these threats were existential: its very existence as a company and its claims to land in North America hinged on its success in the fur trade.³⁶ This threat was compounded by a political one: that the economic ties forged between Indigenous fur producers/traders and merchants from the opposite side of the border would lead to a broader rapprochement between the two, thereby endangering the political and economic interests of fur trade companies and the countries they represented.³⁷

As the leading producers of furs and provisions, trade relations with Indigenous peoples helped underline the significance of the international boundary. This competitive trade environment accentuated the power of Indigenous trappers and traders, even as the introduction of European trade goods—and guns in particular—altered the balance of power among Indigenous peoples.³⁸ At the same time, the production and exchange of furs bound Indigenous peoples and their European partners into often intimate relations defined by kin connections, which allowed male outsiders access to the Indigenous social networks that were at the heart of successful trade. In very real ways, the northwest fur trade hinged on access to Indigenous women by outsider men and enmeshed the traders in the attendant social and cultural obligations.³⁹ Over time, such relations also generated a kind of fur trade social world attached to the trade posts across the continent. In this borderland, imperial economic and political

35 Alvin Gluek, *Minnesota and the Manifest Destiny of the Canadian Northwest: A Study in Canadian-American Relations* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1965), 26–7, 33–6; John Galbraith, "British-American Competition in the Border Fur Trade of the 1820s", *Minnesota History* 36, no. 7 (1959): 242–243.

36 Gluek, *Minnesota and the Manifest Destiny*, 39, 40–43.

37 See *ibid.*, and Elizabeth Fenn, *Encounters at the Heart of the World: A History of the Mandan People* (New York: Hill & Wang, 2014), ch. 8.

38 Colin Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), chs. 6 & 7.

39 See, for example, Hyde, *Empires, Nations and Families*, 97–109; Jean Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014), ch. 5.



ambitions depended on relations within these social worlds.⁴⁰

By the 1840s, the cross-border Indigenous trade networks became ever more significant. In that decade, a series of technological innovations improved steamboat access up the Missouri River and lowered the costs for transporting merchandise to and from the interior, intensifying trade competition on the northeastern Plains. The Plains Métis were among the groups who harnessed these transformations. A post-contact Indigenous people born of the encounters between Europeans and Indigenous peoples in this fur trade world, the Métis had begun large-scale buffalo hunts in the early nineteenth century to meet the HBC's demand for dried buffalo meat or pemmican.⁴¹ At their height, these Métis hunts consisted of twice-annual journeys from communities in the Red River Valley onto the Plains. By the 1840s, Métis brigades contained upwards of two thousand participants. Their members often ventured south and west, across the 49th parallel and the Missouri River, and past the new US fur trade posts established along the river.⁴² In fact, the new demand for buffalo robes among those American traders reworked the economic equation for Métis buffalo hunters and processors, insofar as it allowed them to sell much of the pemmican and meat derived from their summer hunts to the HBC while trading the robes they secured from their winter hunts to US-based traders.⁴³

Métis communities flourished alongside this seasonal cross-border hunting economy. The sheer size of these brigades and

40 Michael McDonnell, "'Il a Epousé une Sauvagesse': Indian and Metis Persistence across Imperial and National Borders", in Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds., *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2008), 162

41 George Colpitts, *Pemmican Empire: Food, Trade, and the Last Bison Hunts in the North American Plains, 1780-1882* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015) 152, 159.

42 Alexander Ross, *The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress, and Present State with Some Account of the Native Races and Its General History, to the Present Day*, 1856. Reprint, (Minneapolis: Ross and Haines, Inc., 1957) 45–6, 49.

43 *Ibid.*, 264–5; Hattie Listenfelt, "The Hudson Bay Company and the Red River Trade", in O.G. Libby, ed., *Collections of the State Historical Society of North Dakota* (Fargo, ND: Knight Printing Co., 1913), 300; Colpitts, *Pemmican Empire*, 216–217.

their martial organization transformed them into a formidable military force, drawing in related bands (especially Ojibwe) who looked to share in the protection they offered. The continual addition of newcomers from different backgrounds enhanced the multicultural nature of these brigades. The kin connections established a multilingual population that was well-versed in the customs of neighbouring groups. Such connections and expertise, in turn, facilitated their movement through the lands of other Indigenous peoples. At the same time, the winter camps on the Plains—in which groups of related families secured and prepared buffalo robes—were also crucibles for the formation of these Métis communities.⁴⁴

The intensification of market relations via the movement of fur and provisions deepened the engagements of Indigenous peoples in the trade and reshaped relations among Plains peoples. Indeed, in the Upper Mississippi region, the intense fur trade competition was part of a wider set of colonial distortions that included the growth of American settlements to the east and the establishment of migrant trails across the Plains. These changes harmed Indigenous lifeways, as did the US policies of ethnic cleansing and relocating Indigenous peoples from the east to the Plains. These displacements caused Indigenous peoples like the Dakotas to be more protective of their hunting grounds. The movement of Métis buffalo hunting brigades in the 1830s and 1840s resulted in armed clashes with different branches of the Dakota Nation. Violence shadowed these hunts and was an integral part of the emerging buffalo economy on the Plains. That violence also forced Métis brigade leaders and Dakota chiefs to craft political agreements that proved equally essential to the functioning of the broader buffalo economy.⁴⁵

Both the conflicts and accommodations between Métis and Dakota became mapped onto national or imperial disputes between the United States and Great Britain in the 1840s. For their part, US officials watched the relations between

44 Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press; Regina: University of Regina Press, 2015), ch. 1.

45 Adam Gaudry, "Kaa-tipeyimishoyaahk-'We are those who own ourselves': A Political History of Métis Self-Determination" (Ph.D. Diss., University of Victoria, 2014); *The Nor'-Wester*, 14 July 1860, 14 August 1860, 15 November 1861.





Dakotas, Métis, and others with increasing wariness, concerned that the growing frustration among Dakotas over Métis buffalo hunts might spark a dangerous cycle of violence that threatened the stability of American frontier settlements in places like Minnesota.⁴⁶ In 1845, the US army dispatched detachments of dragoons to Indian country to meet with leaders and to urge them "to maintain peace among themselves" while impressing them with US power.⁴⁷ The dispatch of those troops coincided with the escalating rhetoric regarding the fate of the Oregon Territory in 1845 and was part of a broader strategy by the US Secretary of War to construct a chain of forts guarding the overland trails to Oregon, California, and New Mexico, as well as to enhance the military presence in the western Great Lakes.⁴⁸ Officials on both sides worried that should war break out between the US and Great Britain, the Métis would exert a dangerous influence over borderlanders when US officials were focused on a brewing war with Mexico.⁴⁹

British officials stood convinced of the potential military threat posed by the growing American military presence, as well as its potential to unsettle local Indigenous peoples. The British government agreed to send troops to Red River in 1846. Even so, HBC Governor George Simpson maintained that in the event of war, the Métis buffalo hunters might serve as a guerilla force.⁵⁰ His suggestion underscored a view, widely held in the 1840s, that the actions of Indigenous peoples in the western Great Lakes and northeastern Plains would be decisive in any war between the US and Great Britain.

46 See, for example, T.H. Crawford to W. Wilkins, November 25, 1844, *ARCIA*, 1844, 14; N. Kittson to H.H. Sibley, 22 August 1844, reel 3, Sibley Papers, M164, MnHS; Woolworth, "Captain Edwin V. Sumner's Expedition", 79–86.

47 W. Scott to W. Wilkins, 23 November 1844, in US Congress, 28th Cong., 2^d Sess., 1844–45, S. Doc. 1, Serial 449, 130.

48 C.P. Stacey, "The Hudson's Bay Company and Anglo-American Military Rivalries during the Oregon Dispute", *Canadian Historical Review* 18, no. 3 (1937): 283–284.

49 J. Chambers to T.H. Crawford, ca. September 1842, in US Congress, "Report of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs", 27th Cong., 3rd Sess., 1842–3, S. Doc. 1, Serial 413, 423.

50 G. Simpson to Governor & Committee, HBC, 28 October 1845, D.4/67, reel 3M22, HBCA.

The resolution of the Oregon Crisis in 1846 defused the immediate threat of war on the northern Plains. However, concerns about cross-border economic and political linkages born of the buffalo economy reemerged forcefully in 1862 with the outbreak of war between Dakota bands in Minnesota and the US Army. The conflict soon engulfed the entire northern Plains as the US army redirected troops from the Civil War battlefields in the US South to the northwest, initiating campaigns that sought to drive the Dakotas farther onto the Plains and even across the 49th parallel. For the Dakotas, cultivating good relations with the Métis traders who carried arms and ammunition (among other goods) in the journeys south across the 49th parallel became increasingly significant as Indian Affairs bureaucrats and military officials sought to restrict the quantity of both as available through American outlets. Those trade links became especially vital after 1862. US officials believed it would be difficult to undercut Dakota autonomy so long as they continued to obtain goods from traders based across the border, and so long as both the Dakotas and the traders who supplied them could escape beyond the border and US jurisdiction.⁵¹

The possibilities for greater unrest along the international boundary therefore continued to bring the ongoing power of Plains indigenous peoples to assert their sovereignty and claims to land into sharp focus. After 1860, the efforts by the US Army to suppress this cross-border trade and to restrict Indigenous mobility laid bare the connection between the desire to suppress Indigenous sovereignty and the efforts to consolidate American control over the northern Plains. US officials were determined to unravel the cross-border economies and networks that sustained groups like the Dakotas because their continued autonomy undermined federal Indian policies and imperiled nascent American settlements. These efforts included diplomatic entreaties by US officials to their counterparts in Britain, which allowed US troops to cross the border in pursuit of Dakotas. The efforts to unravel the cross-border economies of Métis and other Plains Indigenous peoples accelerated in the 1870s and 1880s, as did the American diplomatic efforts to secure permission that would allow troops north onto Canadian

51 See, for example, H.H. Sibley to J. Pope, 20 January 1864, file 343 pt. 2, RG 393, NARA.





territory, just as they had done along their southern border.⁵²

Conclusion

In the nineteenth century, the shifting boundaries of the North American west reflected the capacity of social groups to organize human and material resources. These boundaries—regardless of whether they marked buffalo hunting territories, delimited spaces where the theft and trading of livestock took place, or identified different national jurisdictions—all remained fluid. Even the maintenance of territorial boundaries that were underpinned by binding inter-state agreements remained a constant military and diplomatic struggle. These case studies show the difficulties of making the geographical and legal abstractions that marked the growing state presence concrete. The enforcement of territorial limits was a long, complex process that was mobilized at local, national, and international levels. In these two borderlands, activities such as cattle rustling or the exchange of buffalo meat or skins highlighted the capacity of Indigenous peoples to dispute borders. The intensity of disputes in these locales derived both from the difficulties facing the state in transforming or eliminating Indian-non-Indian networks and imposing sociocultural changes on Indigenous groups.

However, on the US–Mexico border, the flourishing livestock business and illegal activities on which it was based shifted the balance of power between Indigenous peoples, Euro-Americans, and Mexicans. Apaches and Comanches used livestock stolen in Mexico to purchase weapons and horses. The acquisition of these items made them more powerful and more valuable as allies for the Americans. Alliances were formed, mainly between Apaches, Comanches, and Americans, yet sometimes involving a smaller number of Mexican borderlanders. The impacts of market relations were likewise felt in the fabric of these borderland communities along the 49th parallel. Economic exchanges—both licit and illicit, forged by Indigenous borderlanders and their neighbours—linked these locales to national and global

52 See, for example, W. Seward to Lord Lyons, 23 May 1863, US Congress, H. Exec. Doc. 1, 38th Cong., 1st Sess., 1863–64, Serial 1180. Cf. Joseph Manzione, *I Am Looking to the North for My Life: Sitting Bull, 1876–1881* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1991).

markets for livestock and furs, shaping the local economic geography of these borderlands. These exchanges reworked Indigenous trade and subsistence patterns as groups like the Plains Métis and others sought to maximize the economic opportunities associated with the traffic in animal furs and flesh on either side of the border.

These economic adaptations, in turn, changed patterns of relations among Indigenous peoples and became a source of power that exerted a very real effect on the ability of federal actors to sustain their claims to these borderlands. After all, the lands bisected by this boundary remained Indigenous homelands and, thus, in the conflicts that ensued over trade and territory in the mid-nineteenth century, the pivotal economic roles of autonomous Indigenous peoples in sustaining fur trade economies put the spotlight on borderland peoples and the arrangements that sustained their communities, a fact still too often overlooked in the centralist historiographies of Mexico, Canada, and the United States.

Behind these conflicts was a far more fundamental transformation: settlement solidified the state's authority over the territory. The arrival of settlers, traders, and entrepreneurs with a common cultural background who were familiar with the concepts of state, borders, and private property shattered previous agreements and rearranged the social space of the borderlands. In the following decades, mercantile economies based in the fur and hide trade on the northern Plains also began to wane. Their replacement with settler agrarian—or other kinds of extractive economies that relied primarily on access to Indigenous lands rather than labour—radically recast relations between Indigenous peoples and newcomers. In northern Mexico, this transition and the different social relations implied by it had taken a much firmer hold in the mid-nineteenth century, hence the different shape of relations there.

For the Mexican government and the general public, the emphasis by contemporary jurists and theoreticians on the importance of territory seemingly conformed with the observable facts of Mexican history at a time when US expansion and the loss of territory between 1836 and 1853 increased concerns among Mexicans over the future of northern Mexico. They therefore viewed territorial sovereignty as a fundamental part of state-building and

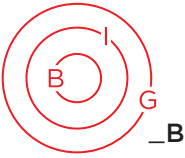




applied colonial settlement policies in response to these external threats.⁵³ They also looked to Article 11 of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo to prevent the cross-border movement of Indigenous groups. Imperial concerns about the power of Indigenous peoples to upset colonial plans for the resettlement of the northern Great Plains, while never as acute as in the Mexican north, continued to reemerge all along the 49th parallel through the 1880s. These conflicts highlighted the importance of US and Canadian officials assigned to sedentarizing mobile Indigenous peoples. Both saw sedentarization as the necessary precursor to their plans to colonize western lands.

In North America, the meticulous definition of territory and the clear demarcation of borders went hand in hand with this sharp nomadic/sedentary dichotomy. In a geographic area where nomadic culture was predominant, a political entity based on the permanent occupation of land by settlers precluded other ways of understanding territory and social relations: Indigenous groups, with their traditions of mobility, could not form part of the state, and as long as they existed, they were an anomaly that prevented its full configuration. The nineteenth century marks the conflict between the idea of the state, which demanded fixity, homogeneity, and continuity, and Indigenous cultures, which represented mobility, heterogeneity, and discontinuity in the conception of territory.

53 Stephan Marquardt, "International law and indigenous peoples", *International Journal on Group Rights* 3, no. 1 (1995): 51.



Chapter 6

Atlantica as a De Facto Historical Concept: A Critical Appraisal

Randy W. Widdis

In the executive summary of his report entitled *Historical Atlantica: How the impact of the past will shape our future* published by the Atlantic Institute for Market Studies (AIMS), historian Robin Neill, a specialist in the history of economic development and policy in Canada and Past Chair of the AIMS Research Advisory Board states: “while the current drive to make business within Atlantica easier is at least partially the result of a move toward global integration, Atlantica has long been a *de facto historical concept* (my italics). ‘Historical Atlantica’ has existed since the 17th century and has, over time, seen varying levels of interaction and integration between the Maritime Provinces, Newfoundland & Labrador, and the northeast United States”¹ (Figure 6.1). Neill argues that policy fails to recognize that historically, the Maritime Provinces have been more closely aligned with the northeastern part of the United States than they have been with central Canada, and that any efforts made during the current phase of globalization to develop strategies that would generate economic growth for the region must recognize this fact. By arguing that we must “turn history to our advantage”, Neill is suggesting that we go back to the future. This chapter critically evaluates this argument considering historical evidence.

1 Robin Neill, *Historical Atlantica: How the impact of the past will shape our future* (Halifax: Atlantic Institute for Market Studies, 2007), v.

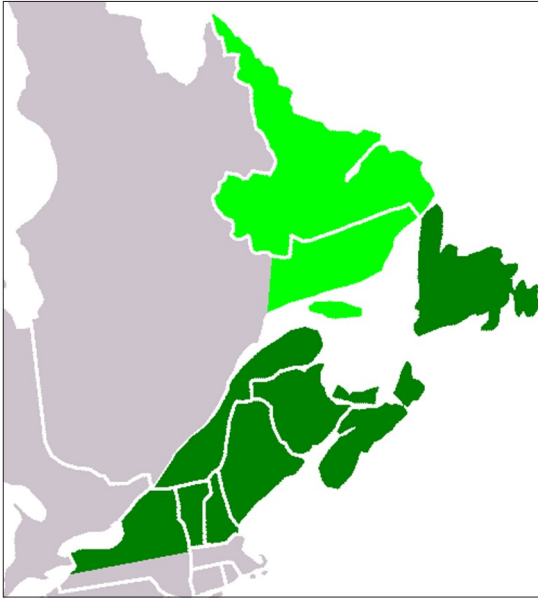


Figure 6.1. Map of proposed Atlantica cross-border economic region. Source: "File:Atlantica.PNG," Wikipedia Commons. <https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Atlantica.PNG#filelinks>. Accessed March 22, 2018. Public Domain.

The History of Cross-border Integration in Northeastern North America

This idea of a more "natural" north-south alignment is something that a few historians have considered, indirectly if not explicitly. For example, John Bartlet Brebner (1927), George Rawlyk (1973), Donald Meinig (1986), Graeme Wynn (1989), and J.M. Bumsted (1999) describe a pre-revolutionary Nova Scotia and Acadia as part of a wider economic and cultural unit whose constituent parts were linked by ties of trade and kinship.² After the expulsion of the Acadians,

2 John Bartlet Brebner, *New England's Outpost: Acadia before the Conquest of Canada*, PhD diss., Columbia University, 1927; George Rawlyk, *Nova Scotia's Massachusetts: A Study of Massachusetts-Nova Scotia Relations 1630-1784* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press, 1973); Graeme Wynn, "New England's Outpost in the Nineteenth Century", in Stephen Hornsby, Victor Konrad, and James Herlan, eds., *The Northeastern Borderlands: Four Centuries of Interaction* (Fredericton, NB: CanadianAmerican

New England farmers, then called 'Planters', took up former Acadian lands. The outcome, they argue, was a northern extension of New England into the former Acadia.

Even though the Planters for the most part chose not to participate in the American Revolution, they remained, in Graeme Wynn's opinion, "New Englanders at heart", bringing with them a culture firmly rooted in New England.³ Yet it was the 35,000 Loyalists arriving during the war and shortly thereafter who would have the greatest impact on the future direction of the Maritimes. The aforementioned scholars maintain that the Planters and the Loyalists introduced some important American political and cultural values—including representative government—and as a consequence were key players in the development of a Maritimes–New England borderland.

Although cross-border connections weakened somewhat after the American Revolution, the Maritime colonies continued to trade with the "Boston states" in what Wynn chooses to call "Greater New England", with a core (Massachusetts), a domain (southern Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, Maine, and Connecticut), and a distant sphere (Prince Edward Island, Cape Breton, and northern New Brunswick and Nova Scotia), omitting Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Vermont. Using this framework, Wynn identifies several "Greater New Englands". The first he designates a greater New England of experience produced by movement of people from both sides across the border, carrying goods and ideas which served to integrate the region and produce a common outlook. Wynn also identifies a greater New England of the primitive and the romantic. Although much more pronounced later, the image of the Maritimes as a pristine wilderness was beginning to take shape by the mid-19th century, creating a vacation hinterland for the more urban and densely populated New England core. Borrowing from the frontierists, Wynn argues that a ready availability of land, isolation, and pioneer conditions combined with proximity to the United States to create a greater New England of attitudes and artefacts

Center, University of Maine and Acadiensis Press, 1989), 64–90; J.M. Bumsted, "Americans", in Paul Magocsi, ed., *Encyclopedia of Canada's Peoples* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press for the Multicultural Society of Ontario, 1999), 186.

3 Wynn, "New England's Outpost", 65.



which resulted in a relative decrease of British manners and customs.

While there is no doubt that the Planters and the Loyalists played a significant role in cultural transfer and the economic development of the Maritimes in the late 18th and early 19th centuries, there are historians who take a contrary view and question the relative importance of New England influences on the development of the region. For example, Elisabeth Mancke maintains that Nova Scotia and Massachusetts developed differently during the colonial period because of different cultures of localism and governance.⁴ The British, she argues, governed Nova Scotia more directly than New England. In particular, she proposes that Nova Scotian townships were politically impotent and isolated from each other because imperial authorities curbed efforts to reproduce New England-style local autonomy. In another forum, Mancke argues that during the 18th century, Nova Scotia was in no position to be self-financing like the other, older colonies to the south, and as such continued to be more dependent on imperial connections with a European core (Britain) than on links with a transnational regional core (New England).⁵

Mancke and Philip Buckner argue that the loyalist presence, although still dominant in certain regions of the Maritimes, was overwhelmed, but not eliminated, within a relatively short period of time by immigrants from Great Britain (e.g., Irish potato famine migrants and Scottish migrants displaced by the Highland clearances).⁶ By 1860, Buckner claims, the Maritimes were characterized by a population which increasingly identified with their particular colony rather than with the wider region, British North America, Britain, or the United States.

4 Elizabeth Mancke, *The Fault Lines of Empire: Political Differentiation in Massachusetts and Nova Scotia, ca. 1760-1830* (New York: Routledge, 2005).

5 Elizabeth Mancke, "Spaces of Power in the Early Northeast", in *New England and the Maritime Provinces*, 32-49.

6 Elizabeth Mancke, *Two Patterns of New England Transformation: Machias, Maine and Liverpool, Nova Scotia*, PhD. diss., The Johns Hopkins University, 1990; Phillip Buckner, "The Transformation of the Maritimes, 1815-1860", *The London Journal of Canadian Studies* 9 (1993): 13-30.

For much of the 19th century, trade and migration, particularly the former, ensured a significant degree of integration between the Maritimes and New England. The "Golden Age" of commerce for the Maritimes, Neill argues, was based largely on Maritimes–New England trade, reaching its zenith during the era of the Reciprocity Treaty (1852–1866).⁷ Trade, however, diminished towards the end of the 19th century with the passing of the Age of Wood, Wind, and Water and decreased dramatically in the 20th century due to the impacts of wars, the Depression, recessions, tariffs, and regional development policy. The implementation of free trade and the recent manifestation of globalization with its unprecedented flows of investment and trade, Neill argues, make it possible for the Maritimes to reconnect economically with the northeastern part of the United States and re-establish the Atlantica connection.

The Atlantic Gateway and Trade Corridor Strategy

In 2007, the Government of Canada released the National Policy Framework for Strategic Gateways and Trade Corridors. This initiative was designed to develop trade corridors and gateways to connect centres of production to markets and help Canadian businesses get their products and services to and from global markets. It is viewed as a necessary measure that will enable Canada to "carve out" a trading space in a world that is being rapidly transformed by processes of globalization. Gateway is the term used to describe the interface of ports, transportation, and freight distribution, and is generally viewed as the point where products converge and are transshipped from one mode of transportation and place to another mode of transportation and another place.⁸ Under the National Policy Framework, the country's trade and transportation gateways were divided into three regions: the Asia–Pacific Gateway and Corridor, the Ontario–Quebec Continental Gateway, and the Atlantic Gateway and Trade Corridor. The policy views efficient transportation systems

7 Neill, *Historical Atlantica*.

8 Jean-Paul Rodrigue, *Gateways, Corridors and Global Freight Distribution: The Pacific and the North American Maritime / Land Interface*, paper presented at the International Conference on Gateways and Corridors, Vancouver, May 2–4, 2007.



as fundamental to the functioning of expanding north-south continental supply chains following the free trade deals.⁹ In addition to facilitating the north-south movement of goods, services and information, these corridors and gateways are also viewed as integral to Canada's efforts to develop supply chains outside North America.

In March 2011, the Atlantic Gateway and Trade Corridor strategy, developed through the collaboration of the Governments of Canada, Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador, as well as the private sector, was released. The corridor essentially functions as a transportation network that connects the northeastern part of North America to markets in Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America, and Asia via the Suez Canal. The architects of the strategy view the region's deep-water ports as an especially valuable resource in the effort to attract freight traffic. Considerable money has been spent to support projects such as terminal expansions at the port of Halifax in Nova Scotia and the port of Belledune in New Brunswick.¹⁰ Halifax, with its deep-water harbour and strategic location, is regarded as ideally suited to meet the demands of global supply chain challenges. Halifax and other Atlantic Canada ports are closest to Europe and the Suez Canal, and therefore potentially offer new trade and transportation routes to Asia.

Besides port development, there have been calls to improve the cross-border highway system connecting New Brunswick and Maine to facilitate land-based truck trade. In 2016, 2,031,260 vehicles entered New Brunswick from the United States. This represented 99.7 percent of the total for the Atlantic region. Of this amount, 25.5 percent were American vehicles with the overwhelming majority being automobiles (23.4 percent of the total), followed distantly by trucks (2.0 percent), and other vehicles (i.e., trains, boats) (0.1 percent). Just under 75 percent were Canadian vehicles and of this amount, 68.6 percent of the total number of vehicles were

9 Stephen Blank and Barry Prentice, "Canada-US Transportation and Corridor Policies", in Geoffrey Hale and Monica Gattinger, eds., *Borders and Bridges: Canada's Policy Relations in North America* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2010), 328.

10 Transport Canada, Gateways and Corridors, *Transportation in Canada 2011* (Ottawa: Transport Canada, 2012). <https://www.tc.gc.ca/eng/policy/anre-menu-3023.htm>. Accessed April 19, 2017.

automobiles, followed by trucks (5.6 percent) and other vehicles (0.3 percent). Of the 5,449,633 trucks crossing the border into Canada in 2016 (68.4 percent returning Canadian and 31.6 percent American), 2.8 percent crossed into New Brunswick, a relatively much lower percentage than that existing for other borderland regions (e.g., St. Lawrence, Great Lakes, Plains and Prairies, Pacific Northwest). The decrease in truck traffic following 9/11 has been significant. In 1972, 186,088 trucks (67.2 percent returning Canadian, 32.8 percent American) crossed into New Brunswick; the figures for 1989, 2000, and 2016 respectively were 221,859 (67.3 percent returning Canadian, 32.7 percent American), 312,117 (76.0 percent returning Canadian, 24.0 percent American), and 155,178 (73.7 percent returning Canadian, 26.3 percent American).¹¹ While insufficient highway infrastructure limits land-based truck trade, the figures reflect the relatively low degree of cross-border economic interaction taking place within this borderland region, a situation that seems to have worsened in the recent past.

Considering the possibilities presented by the Atlantic Gateway strategy, a major question facing Atlantic Canada concerns the direction of its future trading relationship with the United States. While there is no reason to believe that this relationship will end, especially so in the case of New Brunswick, the opportunities offered by developing trade links with Asia and Europe—afforded by reconfigurations of the world economy due to globalization—could result in a relative decline in this connection. The pull of world trade has the potential to reshape the traditional economic link between Atlantic Canada and New England, a relationship that, except for New Brunswick, has weakened somewhat in recent times. The trade routes envisioned by the Atlantic Gateway and Trade Corridor strategy will link Halifax, Saint John and some smaller ports with Mumbai, as well as ports in the Indian Ocean basin, Persian Gulf, and the Suez Canal. This flow of freight, however, will not terminate in Atlantic Canada: it will travel overland by inter-modal transport through New Brunswick to New England and the rest of the US. According to the plan, container ships too large to pass through the Panama Canal would sail to Halifax. The proposed container

11 Statistics Canada. CANSIM table 427-0002, Number of vehicles travelling between Canada and the United States.





terminal at Canso via the Suez Canal and Asian goods would then be trucked across the region to markets in the US Midwest. It is this prospect for movement of more products through Atlantic Canada and New England that generated support for the concept of “Atlantica” in the early 21st century.

The Debate over Atlantica

Preceding the development of the Atlantic Gateway strategy and in the context of the upsurge of neoliberalism and an accelerated phase of globalization that occurred towards the end of the 20th century, a number of individuals and organizations advocated greater integration of Atlantic Canada and New England, the most notable being the aforementioned AIMS, a conservative, free-market think tank based in Halifax who often allude to a shared economy and culture forged by history and geography. The AIMS website, which no longer exists, included various comments to this effect, including: “[Joel] Garreau’s New England shared common beliefs, attitudes and lifestyles. Today, Atlantic Canada and New England still share those things”, and “Canadian Confederation and the emergence of New York City reduced Atlantica, a once-thriving corridor between Halifax and Boston, to a subordinate economic state. The result has been the economic marginalization of Atlantica to centrally located regions across Canada and the United States”.¹² While the traditional inter-regional trade connection between Atlantic Canada and New England has weakened relatively, AIMS favours the kind of economic and political integration resulting from proposals such as the Atlantic Gateway Strategy.

Together with the Eastern Maine Advocacy Corporation, AIMS pushed for a new vision of the old concept of Atlantica. The traditional view of Atlantica was based on the historical trading link between the Maritimes and Boston. Instead, AIMS argued that this definition of the region no longer makes sense. Although most historians who write about

12 Karen Blotnick, “Atlantica a big boost to small business”, *Halifax Chronicle-Herald* (May 13, 2007). Quoted in the AIMS website, <https://www.aims.ca/in-the-media/atlantica-a-big-boost-to-small-business/>. Accessed January 28, 2015. The book the website refers to is: Joel Garreau, *The Nine Nations of North America* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1981).

the strong historical links between the Maritimes and New England during the colonial and post-Revolutionary War eras are in no way connected to various organizations or individuals who propose policies that aim to develop cross-border transportation, energy, and organizational networks, their ideas were appropriated to some degree by those who argued for the end of the east-west status quo that, in Neill's opinion, "unsuccessfully attempted to mould the Maritime Provinces into miniature versions of central Canada".¹³ One individual who did this was Brian Crowley, the former director of AIMS, who brought up the concept of Atlantica in a 2001 speech given to the Atlantic Canadian premiers and New England governors.¹⁴ In his talk, Crowley urged the premiers to reject the idea of an Atlantic Canadian economic union and instead take measures to erase the border and work with northern New England, northern New York, and southeastern Québec to build what he termed the Atlantic International Northeast Economic Region (AINER). Crowley consistently used Atlantica and Neill's arguments to argue for "a return to the north-south ties of history, geography, culture and trade".¹⁵

Northern New England and the Atlantic region, Crowley, Neill, and others argued, are peripheral within their respective countries, while southern New England is fully engaged in an expanding continental system, pursuing different interests. AIMS contended that AINER is bound together by a "shared experience of underdevelopment, dissatisfaction with the status quo, and a commitment to rejoining the mainstream of North American economic life".¹⁶ The way out of this predicament, AIMS argued, lies with "recreating transportation systems within the region that would link it more

13 Neill, *Historical Atlantica*, v.

14 Scott Sinclair and John Jacobs, *Atlantica: Myths and Reality* (Ottawa: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, 2007), 9.

15 *Ibid.*

16 Brian Lee Crowley, "Plugging Atlantica into the Emerging Global Network: Why the International Northeast Economic Region Is the Way of the Future". Text of remarks to the APCC meeting in Montague, PEI, 29 May 2004, as quoted in Stephen Blank, "North American Trade Corridors: An Initial Exploration", Faculty Working Paper (no. 219A) for the Lubin School of Business, Center for Applied Research, May 2006, 10–11. http://digitalcommons.pace.edu/lubinfaculty_workingpapers/50/. Accessed April 12, 2014.



efficiently to the major centers of North American economic development, including what is really a 'north-south corridor that runs east-west from Halifax through Maine'".¹⁷ AIMS and other supporters of this strategy maintained that the cross-border system of transportation and trade resulting from this shared flow of goods from other parts of the world will mutually benefit both regions, thus making up for the relative decrease in conventional cross-border trade.

Those opposed to this argument, including Scott Sinclair and John Jacobs, contended that AIMS, through Crowley and Neill, trivialized the region's economic history by neglecting Atlantic Canada's trade ties within the British Empire and underestimating the east-west economic, cultural, and political ties with the rest of Canada.¹⁸ They and other critics argued that AIMS usurped history and geography to further its neoliberal right-wing agenda, which sought to develop a transport corridor and a parallel energy export corridor that, in their eyes, would facilitate trade between Asia and the North American heartland but would not encourage trade between the Atlantic region and the northeastern United States. Sinclair and Jacob's study, which was released by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, argued that the development of this corridor for "truck-trains" (huge transport trucks with two or more trailers) would have few economic benefits for the rest of the Atlantic region. Increased traffic, they contended, would make the region's roads less safe. The study also pointed out that any expansion of the Panama Canal would diminish the attractiveness of Halifax as a port for Asian cargo. Additionally, it suggested that the proposed increase in energy exports via pipelines resulting from this transportation corridor might have serious environmental effects and warned that the public might not get a fair share of revenues from these publicly owned resources. The study also took issue with Atlantica's deregulation agenda, which targeted minimum wage legislation, the "high" level of unionization, and the region's public services.

Another criticism was directed towards the harmonization of federal and provincial regulations with those of the US that would result from such a strategy, suggesting that this move would seriously affect sovereignty. Tellingly, the AIMS website

17 Blank and Prentice, "North American Trade Corridors", 11.

18 Sinclair and Jacobs, *Atlantica*, 10.

stated that Atlantica is "not about the trade between New Brunswick and the northeastern United States, it's about Asia and the North American heartland".¹⁹ While the movement of goods back and forth between Asia and the interior of North America, particularly the Midwest, would result from this corridor, the question remained as to how much the Atlantic borderland would benefit from such development.

The concept of Atlantica was also referred to in the 2008 final report of the Policy Research Initiative (PRI), which, in the early 2000s, embarked on a project designed to understand cross-border regional linkages as identified in a survey of and interviews and roundtable discussions with individuals and groups that they identified as experts in this area.²⁰ In this report, the authors claimed that "Atlantic Canada has quite active networks and organizational links and fairly significant economic and sociocultural links with its cross-border state partners. This is a cross-border region bound together by a common history, culture, economy and shared challenges".²¹ The authors did admit that the Atlantic cross-border region, which they defined as Atlantic Canada, Maine, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Connecticut, is fragmented by infrastructure deficiencies and weak cross-border institutions, but their basic argument conveyed the impression that this is a strongly integrated region, both culturally and economically.

The descriptive statistics that supported their claims about all the Canada–US cross-border regions were derived from a survey of 110 executive interviews in addition to six regional roundtables engaging roughly 200 leaders from business associations, cross-border regional organizations, public policy think tanks and research institutions, academia, and all levels of government. Perceptions about and attitudes towards the Atlantic cross-border region were drawn from a much smaller sample. The Atlantic organizations mentioned included AIMS, among a few others (e.g., the Atlantic Canada

19 *Atlantic Institute for Market Studies* (AIMS) website, no date. <http://www.aims.ca/>. Accessed March 12, 2017.

20 Policy Research Initiative (PRI), *The Emergence of Cross-Border Regions between Canada and the United States: Reaping the promise and public value of cross-border regional relationships, Final Report* (Ottawa: Government of Canada, 2008).

21 *Ibid.*, iv.





Opportunities Agency, NEG-ECP, the Atlantica Council, the St. Croix International Waterway Commission, Calais/St. Stephen, and the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment). Revealingly, the only detailed viewpoint articulated in the report was that offered by Brian Crowley.

While the linkages between Atlantic Canada and New England are substantial, the report, I believe, oversimplified the nature of this relationship and underestimated the impact of the border. A telling fact is that the two organizations which figured most prominently were AIMS and the non-operational Atlantica Council. The Atlantica Council wanted the laws and regulations of Canada to be streamlined with those of the US to expedite maximum transport in the minimum amount of time so that the cross-border region would be able to better compete with other international trade routes. Also, the report did not address the environmental and economic sovereignty concerns expressed by critics of the Atlantica super-corridor concept. It failed to acknowledge the mixed results achieved by the Annual Conference of the New England Governors and the Eastern Canadian Premiers (NEG-ECP) and the Gulf of Maine Council on the Marine Environment. It also said little about the fact that there has been limited policy convergence in the Atlantic cross-border region despite the history of close ties and neglected the long-established efforts to further integration within Atlantic Canada.²²

The most significant lacuna in the report was its failure to consider that most Atlantic Canadians frame considerations about North American integration, globalization, and neo-liberalism within a historical and cultural viewpoint that primarily values a strong sense of regional community within the loosely structured Canadian federal system. The message of AIMS and the concept of AINER that promoted the idea of northern New England and Atlantic Canada as a coherent economic region did not resonate with Atlantic Canadians even though most favour strong cross-border economic links. Many decried AIMS's support for the elimination of equalization payments and federal subsidies for forestry and fisheries. Atlantic Canadians continue to rail against a system that many perceive as trapping the region within a permanent state of dependency, but, at the same time, they

22 Christopher Kukucha, *The Provinces and Canadian Foreign Trade Policy* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2008).

do not support dismantling their relationship with the rest of the country and do not accept the neoliberal argument that would defend such an action. They continue to look for regional strategies and seek resources and construct relations with the federal government.

This speaks to the fact that despite resentment towards Ottawa and central Canada over the lack of economic development and resultant dependency on federal subsidies and the consequent reservations that many people in the region expressed at various times about Confederation's unfulfilled promise, Atlantic Canada's major frame of reference over time became increasingly national. A number of developments—including the new federalism articulated in the Rowell-Sirois Report; the nation building that accompanied the war effort; Newfoundland's entry into Confederation (and the concomitant reimagining of the Maritimes as Atlantic Canada); the establishment of national standards in education, hospitalization and universal healthcare; and the creation and elaboration of new cultural institutions—forged a deeper allegiance to Canada after World War II.²³ Atlantic Canada was not well placed to adapt to the globalization processes taking place towards the end of the century. Dependence on federal subsidies continued, thus strengthening intra-Canadian links. At a comparative level, the divergence in the fortunes of the two regions, particularly towards the end of the century, further separated Atlantic Canada from New England, even in the context of free trade and globalization. While northern New England has not experienced the same kind of development occurring in the southern part of the region, it still has, arguably, benefited somewhat from the growth taking place in the latter.

As well, there is a muted enthusiasm for developing and coordinating cross-border policy. Cooperation and coordination are hindered by intra-regional competition on both sides of the border and by the fact that neither New England nor Atlantic Canada are coherent regions. Southern New England is the locus of power and population, is primarily oriented to the south, and has limited interest in developing connections with a peripheral part of Canada. Atlantic Canada

23 I wish to thank Colin Howell for drawing my attention to the importance of the Rowell-Sirois Report in the development of Canadian federalism.



has variable connections with New England; New Brunswick has the strongest connections, but these are primarily with Maine.

My own work shows that while connections between Atlantic Canada and New England remained strong over time, the focus for both regions increasingly lay elsewhere.²⁴ Cross-border migration—overwhelmingly from Atlantic Canada to New England—was substantial between 1880 and 1930, but then declined in importance during the Depression as the American government imposed severe restrictions on continental immigration. From this point on, Atlantic Canadians leaving the region targeted other parts of Canada, at first Ontario and then Alberta. Cross-border transportation by boat improved, but land-based transportation, while developing significantly with the advent of the automobile, continued to be problematic. Cross-border investment increased but remained relatively minor compared to that taking place in other borderland regions. The flows and networks of inward and outward capital for the Maritimes—and, since 1949, Newfoundland—have taken place mostly within the confines of the Canadian nation-state. New England investment found its greatest markets elsewhere than Atlantic Canada, either throughout the United States or outside America's borders. Cross-border communication expanded but was tempered by the development of technologies such as cable television and the internet which extended the information field well beyond the borders of the transnational region and pulled viewers away from traditional borderland references. Cross-border trade continued but declined in relative importance in light of increasing connections taking place within both Canada and the United States. This was less the case for New Brunswick, which maintained stronger connections to New England than the other Atlantic provinces. Cross-border governance became more important towards the end of the 20th century but faced obstacles that impaired its effectiveness.

24 Randy Widdis, "Greater New England as Cultural Borderland: A Critical Appraisal", *Acadiensis* XLVI, no. 1 (2017): 97–121; Randy Widdis, "The Atlantic Borderland: Processes of Bordering and the Re-Imagining of Region", in Victor Konrad and Randy Widdis, eds., *Borders and Bordering in Atlantic Canada* (Victoria, BC: University of Victoria and Borders in Globalization BIG Books Series, # 1, 2021), 23–50.

Conclusion

Brian Crowley resigned as the president of AIMS in 2009. Over time, AIMS positioned New England more as a competitor of Atlantic Canada than as part of a common region. In a March 30, 2016 media release, AIMS called for Atlantic Canada's provincial governments to reduce taxes in order to compete more effectively against its major competitors which it identified as the six states of New England.²⁵ AIMS continued in its role as a right-wing think tank espousing cross-border integration, but it appeared to temper its message of dismantling the border. A survey of AIMS publications between 2016 and 2019 showed that there was hardly any use of Atlantica as a de facto historical concept. As well, my investigation of the agendas of recent meetings between the New England Governors and Eastern Canadian Premiers revealed little evidence of reference to the concept of Atlantica. Instead, concerns revolve primarily around issues related to trade, climate, transportation, and energy matters.

In November 2019, AIMS formally merged with the Vancouver-based Fraser Institute to create the largest "independent" think tank in Canada. The Fraser Institute, with branches right across the country, has been described as both politically conservative²⁶ and ideologically libertarian.²⁷ AIMS no longer has a website and has been totally subsumed under the Fraser Institute's new Atlantic Canada Initiative. This merger, the Fraser Institute claims, will result in the provision of "practical policy solutions to raise living standards and increase prosperity for people in Atlantic Canada today and

25 "Media Release: Atlantic Canada vs. New England tax comparison study". AIMS website, March 30, 2016. <http://www.aims.ca/media-releases/media-release-atlantic-canada-vs-new-england-tax-comparison-study/>. This website no longer exists but has been subsumed under the Fraser Institute website. See: www.fraserinstitute.org/aims.

26 Martin Thunert, "Conservative Think Tanks in the United States and Canada", in Rainer-Olaf Schultze, Roland Sturm, and Dagmar Eberle, eds., *Conservative Parties and Right-Wing Politics in North America: Reaping the Benefits of an Ideological Victory?* (VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2003), 229–252.

27 Paul Havemann "Marketing the New Establishment Ideology in Canada", *Crime and Social Justice* 26 (1986): 11–37.



for future generations”.²⁸ Tellingly, the first major publication resulting from this initiative, *Catching Up with Canada: A Prosperity Agenda for Atlantic Canada*, does not mention the concept of Atlantica, nor does it refer to the work of Robin Neill in its brief historical account of the region’s history.²⁹ Neither does the study espouse the idea of developing a cross-border transportation and trade corridor. Instead, it advocates following neoliberal pro-growth policies including tax and regulatory reform, reduced government spending, elimination of interprovincial trade barriers, balanced budgets, and less debt.

To conclude, history shows us that the Atlantic or Northeastern borderland is not the amorphous region as intimated by the idea of a Greater New England, the concept of Atlantica, or even the cross-border region as described by the Policy Research Institute. The effort of AIMS and others to present a partial and somewhat biased version of borderland history in order to support a market success/government failure narrative proved unsuccessful. This case study demonstrates that while history can be a valuable tool for understanding contemporary issues and add value to the policy-making process, it can also be exploited by those who either hold or seek power and influence. Policymakers would do well to recognize this.

28 “Fraser Institute News Release: AIMS Merges with the Fraser Institute to Create Canada’s Largest Independent Public Policy Think-Tank”, *Global Newswire*, November 20, 2019. <https://www.globenewswire.com/en/news-release/2019/11/20/1949893/0/en/Fraser-Institute-News-Release-AIMS-merges-with-the-Fraser-Institute-to-create-Canada-s-largest-independent-public-policy-think-tank.html>.

29 Ben Eisen et al., *Catching Up with Canada: A Prosperity Agenda for Atlantic Canada* (Vancouver: Fraser Institute, 2019).

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Borders are historically contingent and evolve through processes of bordering. Their meanings are constantly changing along with political, economic, and social developments taking place both externally between and internally within states. Like borders, borderlands must also be situated in their temporal and geographical contexts in order to investigate the relations between territory, identity, and sovereignty. The chapters in this collection present selective historical interpretations of borders and borderlands that focus primarily on North American borderlands, emphasizing flows, sovereignty, and indigeneity, three key themes of the Borders in Globalization program.

About the Editor

Randy W. Widdis, a Professor Emeritus in the Department of Geography and Environmental Studies at the University of Regina, served as lead for the Historical Theme section of the Borders in Globalization Project. Much of his theoretical and empirical work uses historical geography and border theory to expand our understanding of spatial and temporal bordering processes.

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