

Why does this matter?

- Early modern cartography has often been perceived as a European innovation used to depict Latin America, a view that positions the region as a passive object of observation and Europeans as creators of its geographic and historical narratives.
- Yet, Indigenous peoples influenced representations of Latin America by engaging in cross-cultural interactions, and they also actively shaped political and legal interactions by defending their land, political authority, and material resources.
- Examining the ways in which maps reveal this agency is critical to **revising portrayals of Indigenous peoples as passive** in their interactions with Europeans.
- These maps highlight **contemporary cases** in which Indigenous **communities whose cartographic knowledge has been marginalized** have used maps to **represent their homelands and advocate for their rights**.

INDIGENOUS AGENCY IN LATIN AMERICAN CARTOGRAPHY

How did Indigenous peoples challenge the notion that they were passive objects of colonial observation by influencing representations of Latin America and deploying maps to defend territory and political authority?

How Indigenous peoples influenced representations of Latin America by engaging in cross-cultural interactions

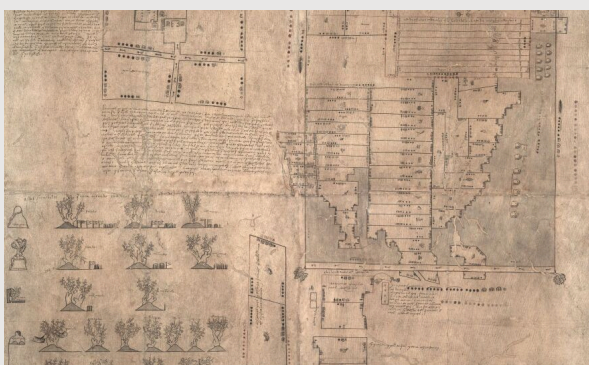


- Elements indicate **Indigenous influence** because they **diverge from European cartographic traditions** while aligning with **Mexica understandings** of Tenochtitlán.
 - Although the map as a whole faces west, the temple precinct is oriented in the opposite direction, and most Indigenous maps traditionally faced east.
 - A face representing the sun is between the two towers of the Templo Mayor, and this image would be unusual in European cartography, where the sun is typically depicted in the sky rather than within geographic space if it is pictured at all. For the Mexica, however, this placement was meaningful, for the year was divided into two periods according to over which tower the sun rose, and on equinoxes, it rose exactly between them.
- The possibility that the first published map of a Latin American city was adapted from an Indigenous source challenges conventional assumptions about cartographic authorship that place Europeans in the active role by suggesting that Indigenous Americans **shaped early representations of the city**.

How Indigenous peoples deployed maps to defend their...

LAND

- The Indigenous nobility of Tetzaco used the Oztoticpac Lands Map to defend their property in the wake of a 1539 attack by the bishop of Mexico, Juan de Zumárraga. After executing don Carlos, a hereditary ruler of Tetzaco, the bishop sought to seize his lands.
- By **distinguishing between his personal property and inalienable patrimony** belonging to the royal line through the map's glosses, the royal family aimed to keep the dynasty's fortunes intact.
- Two hands reach for the fruit trees, an indication that they belonged only partially to don Carlos, for a Spaniard had entered into a commercial agreement with him to grow European fruits.
- Beyond demonstrating agency through the assertion of hereditary rights, the document also reflects Indigenous agency in other ways: it reveals how native nobles **actively engaged in commercial partnerships; adapted to emerging markets; and incorporated new agricultural techniques**, including grafting.
- Felipe Guaman Poma of Ayala, a native of the Peruvian Andes, asserted his **kin group's rights to ancestral lands** through legal petitions, for which he created a map of the colonial jurisdiction of Huamanga. Small warrior figures representing his ancestors are a visual declaration of their historical ownership of the lands of Chupas.



Oztoticpac Lands Map, created in Tetzaco around 1540 by an Indigenous scribe



Map of Huamanga, Peru, created by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala in the 1590s

MATERIAL RESOURCES

- This map of Acultzingo was copied for the Comisión Geográfico-Exploradora, which asked village officials and landowners to submit land titles and existing maps that documented their territorial claims. The importance of Acultzingo inhabitants' steady supply of water indicates that the lines signify waterways.
- Surveyors sometimes rejected such maps, perceived as lacking scientific rigor, in favor of representations such as the map produced by the Prussian surveyor Martin Holzinger. Yet, in his image, the life-sustaining feature most meaningful to the town's residents is difficult to detect.
- Another copy of the colonial map was submitted as campesinos sought to recover lands and water sources and defend their claims in a boundary dispute. The map's emphasis on waterways, vital to the community's survival, supported these claims. By drawing on original land titles and vernacular cartographic traditions, the map reinforced the town's historical and legal precedence as well.
- The Acultzingo community exercised **agency** by **submitting a map that asserted a locally grounded understanding**. Moreover, the map became an **active instrument in disputes over water access and municipal boundaries**.

POLITICAL AUTHORITY

- Through *Mapa mundi de[l] Reino de las In[di]as*, Guaman Poma proposed a **reordered Christian empire** in which a restored Christian Inca ruler would govern an autonomous Kingdom of the Indies while the Spanish king would serve as a symbolic "universal monarch."
- He used the structure of *mappaemundi* (medieval European Christian world maps) but incorporated Andean elements, including the Andean cosmological concept of ordered space.
- By placing Cuzco, the imperial capital, at the center, Guaman Poma positioned it as analogous to Jerusalem in medieval *mappaemundi* and presented the Andes as central to Christian sacred history. Cuzco is depicted as ruled by the Tupac Yupanqui Inca and his queen, with the symbols of the Roman Catholic Church and Spanish Crown above them, a visual linkage between Andean political authority and Christian imperial power.
- Through this **synthesis of Andean and Christian traditions**, Guaman Poma articulated a vision of renewed Andean leadership within a Christian imperial framework and **asserted the legitimacy of Indigenous political authority under Spanish sovereignty**.



Mapa mundi de[l] Reino de las In[di]as, created by Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala in 1615

Late sixteenth/early seventeenth century to late nineteenth century

Copy of a map of San Juan Bautista de Acultzingo, Veracruz, created in 1895



Plano de la División de los Terrenos del Pueblo de Acultzingo, created by Martin Holzinger in 1872

