

# Forum: Global Mormon Studies

## Indigenizing Mormonisms

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OVER GENERATIONS, SCHOLARS HAVE EMPHASIZED the binary of “Mormons and Indians” using racialized terms.<sup>1</sup> This language and approach often overlooks complex dynamics and locally specific identities of peoples and communities that engaged with Mormonism in North America and Central America.<sup>2</sup> Since the founding of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, many Mormons have identified Indigenous peoples of the Americas as “Lamanites,” comparable to how white settler colonizers categorized Natives as “Indians.” Although colonizers, including Mormon settlers, used such terms to shape Indigenous identities and populations, individuals and communities appropriated and adapted them.

The framework of academic inquiry into Indigenous peoples originated from within hegemonic colonizing institutions and entities. By 1998, Linda Tuhiwai Smith and other Indigenous scholars called

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1. For example, Leonard J. Arrington, “The Mormons and the Indians: A Review and Evaluation,” *The Record* 31 (1970): 4–29. See also Bruce A. Chadwick and Stan L. Albrecht, “Mormons and Indians: Beliefs, Policies, Programs, and Practices,” in *Contemporary Mormonism: Social Science Perspectives*, ed. Marie Cornwall, Tim B. Heaton, and Lawrence A. Young (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 287–309; and Lori Elaine Taylor, “Telling Stories about Mormons and Indians” (PhD diss., State University of New York at Buffalo, 2000).

2. For a discussion of non-Indian conceptualizations of Indigenous Peoples in North America, see Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), 53.

for “decolonizing methodologies” and challenged academia to understand Indigenous peoples from their community-based perspectives and needs.<sup>3</sup> Academic approaches to “Mormons and Indians” followed some general trends in addressing Indigenous peoples, their histories, and their cultures from perspectives of white settler bias and authorship. Sources primarily came from white settlers and their descendants, which the methodologies reflected. “Indians” often represented voiceless objects of the wilderness that so-called “civilized” whites confronted while settling the lands of North America. Scholars of Mormon studies share similar Anglo frameworks to these histories and studies in Canada and the United States; whereas, studies of Mexico and parts of Central America differ in contextualizing colonialism and Indigenous identities.<sup>4</sup> Despite these differences, Mormon studies has mapped how Euro-Americans presented a foreign religion with Indigenous roots as belonging to the original inhabitants of the Americas and their descendants—Lamanites.<sup>5</sup>

Of the various central tenets of Indigenous Mormon studies in North and Central America, three themes remained strong in public and scholarly thought. First, Mormon settlement studies positioned Native Americans and Indigenous peoples as obstacles to white Mormon colonies. Secondly, Mormon and scholarly communities considered the meanings and appropriations of Lamanite identities. Thirdly, scholarship turned to Mormon Indigenous lived experiences and perspectives. The recent approach of scholars recognizes that the colonized areas of the Americas was not wilderness or “virgin soil” but the homelands of Indigenous peoples.

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3. See Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1998), 4. See also Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed. (London: Zed Books, 2012), 2.

4. For understanding different contexts and meanings of “Indian” and “Indigenous,” see Maximilian C. Forte, *Who is an Indian? Race, Place, and the Politics of Indigeneity in the Americas* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 4–5; and Robert Warrior, ed., *The World of Indigenous North America* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

5. See Max Perry Mueller, *Race and the Making of the Mormon People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2017), 9.

Contradictions infuse the justifications and actions of colonizers, which affected scholars who sought to understand them. In a whisper, a Diné relative who converted to Mormonism told me “what they say” about white Mormons who live in a town that borders the Navajo Nation: “They love the Lamanites, but they hate the Indians.” This tension often underlies many of the sources about Mormons and Indians. Only recently have more sources considered Mormon Indians. Indigenous writers have authored various sources, primarily articles and dissertations, but their works remain yet to be widely propagated and recognized. Native and non-Native scholars, including me as Diné dóó Gáamalii (Navajo Mormon), seek to “decolonize” and “reclaim” Indigenous histories of Mormonism.<sup>6</sup> We continue to consider how to indigenize studies, while many public memories and understandings still refer to outdated ideas of “Mormons and Indians.”

## Mormon Settlement/Mormon Conquest

Considering the first vein of Mormon and Indian studies, which laid the groundwork for literature on Indigenous peoples’ interactions with Mormonism, settlement and later recognition of Mormon colonialism, conquest, and invasion were central to academic discourse. In his bibliographical treatise on “Mormons and Native Americans,” David Whittaker cites some typical sources that portrayed Indians as deterrants to

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6. See Elise Boxer, “‘The Lamanites Shall Blossom as the Rose’: The Indian Student Placement Program, Mormon Whiteness and Indigenous Identity,” *Journal of Mormon History* 41, no. 4 (2015): 132–76; Elise Boxer, “‘To Become White and Delightful’: American Indians and Mormon Identity” (PhD diss., Arizona State University, 2009), iii; Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks, eds. *Decolonizing Mormonism: Approaching a Postcolonial Zion* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2018); Moroni Benally, “Decolonizing the Blossoming: Indigenous People’s Faith in a Colonizing Church,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 50, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 71–78; P. Jane Hafen, “The Being and Place of a Native American Mormon,” in *New Genesis: A Mormon Reader on Land and Community*, ed. Terry Tempest Williams, William B. Smart, and Gibbs M. Smith (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1998), 35–41; and Farina King, “Miss Indian BYU: Contestations over the Crown and Indian Identity,” *Journal of the West* 52, no. 3 (Summer 2013): 10–21.

Mormon settlement and western expansion.<sup>7</sup> By the twenty-first century, Martha C. Knack, Paul Reeve, and Jared Farmer developed studies that underscored the impacts of Mormon settler colonialism on Indigenous communities.<sup>8</sup> Ned Blackhawk traced “violence over the land” in Mormon–Indian encounters and exchanges, especially regarding slave trafficking.<sup>9</sup> Other scholars have investigated cases of slavery, indentured servitude, and adoption of Indian children among Mormons.<sup>10</sup>

Some studies have focused on Native American figures and their involvement with the church in the nineteenth century. These narratives offer glimpses into the lives of such baptized Indigenous Mormons as Sagwitch, Sally Young Kanosh, Wakara, Arapeen, Teuve, and Sarah Maraboos Hatch.<sup>11</sup> Several academic collaborations emphasize the

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7. See David Whitaker, “Mormons and Native Americans: A Historical and Bibliographical Introduction,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18, no. 4 (Winter 1985): 33–64; David Whittaker, James B. Allen and Ted J. Warner, “The Gosiute Indians in Pioneer Utah,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 39, no. 2 (Spring 1971): 162–77; Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. “Model Zions for the American Indian,” *American Quarterly* 15, no. 2 (Summer 1963): 176–90; and Juanita Brooks, “Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier,” *Utah Historical Quarterly* 12, no. 1/2 (Jan./April 1944): 1–48.

8. Martha C. Knack, “Interethnic Competition at Kaibab During the Early Twentieth Century,” *Ethnohistory* 40, no. 2 (Spring 1993): 212–45; W. Paul Reeve, *Making Space on the Western Frontier: Mormons, Miners, and Southern Paiutes* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006); and Jared Farmer, *On Zion’s Mount: Indians, Mormons, and the American Landscape* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008).

9. Ned Blackhawk, “Utah’s Indians and the Crisis of Mormon Settlement,” in *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 239.

10. Juanita Brooks explored these topics as early as the 1940s; for example, see Brooks, “Indian Relations on the Mormon Frontier,” 2. See Michael Kay Bennion, “Captivity, Adoption, Marriage and Identity: Native American Children in Mormon Homes, 1847–1900” (MA thesis, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 2012); Margaret D. Jacobs, “Entangled Histories: The Mormon Church and Indigenous Child Removal from 1850 to 2000,” *Journal of Mormon History* 42, no. 2 (April 2016): 27–60; and Brian Q. Cannon, “‘To Buy Up the Lamanite Children as Fast as They Could’: Indentured Servitude and Its Legacy in Mormon Society,” *Journal of Mormon History* 44, no. 2 (April 2018): 1–35.

11. See, for example, Scott Christensen, *Sagwitch: Shoshone Chieftain, Mormon Elder, 1822–1887* (Logan: Utah State University, 1999); Mueller, *Race and the Making of the Mormon People*, 167–74, 186–88; and Corey Smallcanyon, “Contested Space:

entanglements of Mormons and Indians, highlighting convergences, nuances, and intricacies. They bring together efforts to examine race, gender, and colonialism in Mormon Indigenous spaces.<sup>12</sup> As part of this cohort, Amanda Hendrix-Komoto traces how Mormon missionaries served as imperial agents by impressing their notions of “domesticity” and polygamy on Indigenous women, including American Indians, throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>13</sup>

More scholars should address parallel and intersecting histories of Mormon colonialism throughout North America and its impacts on the First Nations Peoples in Canada.<sup>14</sup> In the 1970s, Keith Parry analyzed Mormon influences and interactions with Kainai communities through schooling and missions in the Cardston region.<sup>15</sup> He

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Mormons, Navajos, and Hopis in the Colonization of Tuba City” (MA thesis, Brigham Young University, 2010).

12. Andrea Radke-Moss and Dee Garceau are editing a volume, tentatively titled “Race, Gender, and Power in the Mormon Borderlands,” which centers on “the continental U.S. West, the borderlands of Canada and Mexico, and Pacific Rim islands such as Samoa and Hawaii, exploring the intersectionality of race and gender in Mormon cultures of the nineteenth through twenty-first centuries” (as described in their call for articles from 2015). With support from the Charles Redd Center for Western Studies, Brenden Rensink and P. Jane Hafen are editing a separate volume, titled *Nor Any Manner of –Ites: American Indians and Mormons* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, forthcoming 2019).

13. Amanda Hendrix-Komoto’s forthcoming book, tentatively titled “Imperial Zions: Mormon Missionary Work and the Politics of Domesticity in the American West and Pacific,” has a contract with the University of Nebraska Press. See also Amanda Hendrix-Komoto, “Imperial Zions: Mormons, Polygamy, and the Politics of Domesticity in the Nineteenth Century” (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 2015).

14. Most studies focus on Mormon colonies of white settlers in Canada. See, for example, Brigham Y. Card, ed., *The Mormon Presence in Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1990); John C. Lehr, “Polygamy, Patrimony, and Prophecy: The Mormon Colonization of Cardston,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 21, no. 4 (Winter 1988): 114–21; Carma T. Prete and Roy A. Prete, *Canadian Mormons: History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 2017); and Lou Jean S. Wiggins, “Settlement of Canada by Utah Pioneers, Alberta Province,” *Pioneer Pathways* 9 (2006): 49–100.

15. See, for example, Keith Parry, “‘To Raise These People Up’: An Examination of a Mormon Mission to an Indian Community as an Agent of Social Change,” (PhD diss., University of Rochester, 1972); and Parry, “Blood Indians and ‘Mormon’ Public

reframed and challenged the white/Indian dichotomy that permeated Mormon studies involving Indigenous peoples by recognizing shared identities among whites and Kainai Latter-day Saints.<sup>16</sup> Another notable work, Sarah Carter's *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada* (2008), addresses Canadian efforts to conform marriage practices and lifestyles of Indigenous peoples and Mormon newcomers. She compares forms of Mormon and First Nations' polygamy, tracing how officials and government sought to control both communities and their marriages in a terrain affected by nation-building.<sup>17</sup> Of sources that feature Indigenous Mormons in Canada, Glen G. Fisher, former president of the Western Canadian Mission, recounted how Cree leader Yellowface embraced the Book of Mormon as the history of his ancestors. Such sources have, however, filtered perspectives and experiences through non-Indigenous narration.<sup>18</sup>

## Lamanite Identity

Many Mormons applied the term "Lamanites" to refer to Indigenous peoples of North America, Latin America, and the Pacific Islands.<sup>19</sup>

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Schools: A Case Study of Ethnicity and Integrated Education," in *Education, Change and Society: A Sociology of Canadian Education*, ed. R. A. Carlton, L. A. Colley, and N. J. MacKinnon (Toronto: Gage Educational Publishing, 1977), 225–38.

16. Parry, "To Raise These People Up," iv-v.

17. Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press and University of Alberta Press, 2008).

18. See Glen G. Fisher, "The Story of Yellowface," *Improvement Era* 55 (March 1952): 147–50, 180–84.

19. See studies that address definitions and appropriations of Lamanites, including Armand L. Mauss, *All Abraham's Children: Changing Mormon Conceptions of Race and Lineage* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2003), 10; Hokulani K. Aikau, *A Chosen People, A Promised Land: Mormonism and Race in Hawai'i* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012); Marjorie Newton, *Tiki and Temple: The Mormon Mission in New Zealand, 1854–1958* (Draper, Utah: Greg Kofford Books, 2012); and Thomas W. Murphy, "Other Mormon Histories: Lamanite Subjectivity in Mexico," *Journal of Mormon History* 26 (Fall 2000): 179–214.

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, white Mormons often regarded Indians simultaneously as “noble savages” and Lamanites who were “a chosen people.”<sup>20</sup> Some analyses of the Book of Mormon have dismantled simplistic views of Indians as Lamanites, but Mormons generally called Indians “Lamanites” into the late twentieth century.<sup>21</sup>

Scholars began to debate how people living in the Americas and beyond related to the Book of Mormon and ancient civilizations. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, some researchers questioned the Book of Mormon claim that Indians are the descendants of Lamanites and Israelites. They referred to DNA evidence to assert that Native Americans do not descend from the Israelites. Other Mormon scholars responded with their own critiques and rebuttals of such DNA studies and conclusions.<sup>22</sup>

In 2008, John-Charles Duffy outlined shifting definitions of “Lamanite” in the church. During the nineteenth century, church leaders began to view Indigenous peoples of the Americas and the Pacific Islands as descendants of Book of Mormon ancient civilizations. When Joseph Smith presided over the church between 1830 and 1844, he called

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20. Leonard J. Arrington and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Experience: A History of the Latter-day Saints* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1979), 146.

21. See, for example, S. Lyman Tyler, *Modern Results of the Lamanite Dispersion: The Indians of the Americas* (Provo, Utah: Extension Publications, Division of Continuing Education, Brigham Young University, 1965).

22. Considering DNA and criticism of identifying Indians as Lamanites, see Thomas W. Murphy, “Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics,” in *American Apocrypha*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002); Thomas W. Murphy and Simon G. Southerton, “Genetic Research a ‘Galileo Event’ for Mormons,” *Anthropology News* 44, no. 2 (February 2003): 20; and Simon Southerton, *Losing a Lost Tribe: Native Americans, DNA, and the Mormon Church* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2004). For responses to such criticisms, see Daniel C. Peterson, ed. *The Book of Mormon and DNA Research* (Provo, Utah: Neal A. Maxwell Institute, 2008); and “Book of Mormon and DNA Studies,” *Gospel Topics*, <https://www.lds.org/topics/book-of-mormon-and-dna-studies?lang=eng>, accessed May 30, 2018 (originally published January 2014 and updated April 2017). See also Ugo A. Perego and Jayne E. Ekins, “Is Deciphering the Genetic Legacy of America’s Indigenous Populations Key to the Historicity of the Book of Mormon?” *Interpreter: A Journal of Mormon Scripture* 12 (2014): 237–79.

Indians the “Lamanites.” He also identified ruins in Mesoamerica as the works of ancient peoples from the Book of Mormon.<sup>23</sup>

Although scholars already questioned whether all Indigenous peoples of the Americas and the Pacific Islands were Lamanites, many church leaders claimed that the Book of Mormon was their “history” as descendants of Israelites because it supported proselytization efforts. The church did not increase missionary work among American Indians until the mid-twentieth century, when, for instance, Spencer W. Kimball, created church programs for Natives. Kimball disseminated his “Lamanite” message, beckoning Natives to rise as select people to build Zion throughout the Americas and Pacific Islands.<sup>24</sup>

## Indigenous Mormons

Spearheaded by church officials such as Kimball, the church developed the Indian Student Placement Program (ISPP) and other such initiatives as the Indian Seminary and Brigham Young University Indian programs. Armand Mauss tracked this growth of Mormon Indian programs and Native American membership between the 1950s and 1970s, and how they diminished in the 1980s as the church redirected more resources and programs towards Latin America and broader global outreach. Activists, especially the American Indian Movement, condemned ISPP for removing Native American children from their communities, propagating forms of Indian child abuse, and assimilating them to white Mormon cultures. Yet many Native American students converted to the church and some embraced a Lamanite identity. ISPP affected Indigenous youth and families in the United States and Canada, but most studies have focused on students in the southwestern US and Utah.<sup>25</sup>

23. Arrington and Bitton, *The Mormon Experience*, 122–31.

24. Arrington and Bitton, 132–44; Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children*, 74–80.

25. In 2012, I had the opportunity to invite and hear the personal ISPP story and experiences of Strater Crowfoot, former Head Chief of the Siksika Nation, on a panel during the Mormon History Association annual meeting in Calgary, Canada. Barbara Jones Brown interviewed Crowfoot for the panel and featured some of his stories in her

By the twenty-first century, once ISPP was cancelled and official church discourse moved away from equating Native Americans with Lamanites, Native Americans had mixed responses to the church and the history of the past half century. Some Native Americans, such as George P. Lee (Diné)—former and first Native American member of the Seventy—were excommunicated or left the church.<sup>26</sup> Before his excommunication, Lee published a personal memoir and biography, *Silent Courage* (1987), as a Navajo church member.<sup>27</sup> Despite his schism, other Natives continued to participate in the church, while still personally believing in their Lamanite identity. Some Native American church members, such as Lacey A. Harris, P. Jane Hafen, and Helen Sekaquaptewa, wrote reflective essays and personal narratives that expressed their complicated self-understandings as Mormon and Indian.<sup>28</sup> Louise Udall wrote *Me and Mine: The Life Story of Helen Sekaquaptewa*, which sketches the biography of a Hopi woman who converted to Mormonism. Udall traces various aspects of Sekaquaptewa's life, such as the overarching Hopi culture, her upbringing, and schooling to underscore impacts of colonization and assimilation.<sup>29</sup>

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presentation. Barbara Jones Brown, "Integrating Them Into Our Lives: Progressivism, Paternalism, and the Indian Student Placement Program in Canada, 1964–1967" (paper, Mormon History Association Annual Conference, Calgary, Alberta, Canada, June 29, 2012). Stanley Thayne refers to Strater Crowfoot based on his interviews with his wife, Ellen Cook Crowfoot; see Stanley Thayne, "The Blood of Father Lehi: Indigenous Americans and the Book of Mormon" (PhD diss., University of North Carolina, 2016), 166–67. Yet publications featuring First Nations' experiences with the Placement Program have yet to be developed and disseminated. I am especially grateful to Stanley Thayne for sharing his work with me for this review.

26. George P. Lee, "The Lee Letters," *Sunstone* 13 (August 1989): 50–55.

27. George P. Lee, *Silent Courage: An Indian Story* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Company, 1987).

28. Lacey A. Harris, "To Be Native American and Mormon," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18, no. 4 (1985): 143–52; P. Jane Hafen, "'Great Spirit Listen': The American Indian in Mormon Music," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 18, no. 4 (1985): 131–42; and P. Jane Hafen, "The Being and Place of a Native American Mormon," in *New Genesis: A Mormon Reader on Land and Community*, ed. Terry Tempest Williams, William B. Smart, and Gibbs M. Smith (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1998), 38.

29. Louise Udall, *Me and Mine: The Life Story of Helen Sekaquaptewa* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1969).

Udall and other scholars, however, frame Sekaquaptewa's life as a smooth and inevitable transition from Hopi traditionalism to American acculturation, including her relationship to Mormonism.<sup>30</sup> Harris and Hafen reflect directly about their experiences and identities as Mormon Native Americans.

In academic discourse, however, beyond Mauss and the works of Elise Boxer and Matthew Garrett, not much has been written on the development of Mormon Indian communities in the late twentieth century. Boxer presents an Indigenous scholar's perspective on Mormon-Indian relations that recognizes such church programs as ISPP as perpetuating Mormon colonization of Native Americans into the modern era.<sup>31</sup> In his study, Garrett examines the ISPP to argue for a nuanced approach to understanding the intentions of Mormons and the mixed responses of Native Americans in their programs. He traces the experiences of Native American, especially Diné, church members and the developments of ISPP, but remains restricted by his lack of understanding of Indigenous contexts and cultures.<sup>32</sup>

Another contribution to such dialogue includes Robert McPherson, Sarah Burak, and Jim Dandy's biography of Dandy. They explore an example of a Native American church member who harmonizes his Diné and Mormon identities and belief systems, but the text does not outline overarching Native American-Mormon relations especially beyond Dandy's context.<sup>33</sup> Many public conversations, opinions, and stances concern Mormon-Indian relations in the twentieth century, but

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30. Udall, 124. Sekaquaptewa stated, "When we heard of and read the Book of Mormon it sounded like a familiar story . . . What they taught sounded good to me, like a familiar philosophy, like the teachings we were used to, like the Hopi way" (p. 124).

31. Boxer, "'The Lamanites Shall Blossom as the Rose,'" 134-36; and Elise Boxer, "'This is the Place!' Disrupting Mormon Settler Colonialism," in Colvin and Brooks, *Decolonizing Mormonism*, 77-99.

32. Matthew Garrett, *Making Lamanites: Mormons, Native Americans, and the Indian Student Placement Program, 1947-2000* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2016).

33. Robert S. McPherson, Jim Dandy, and Sarah E. Burak, *Navajo Tradition, Mormon Life: The Autobiography and Teachings of Jim Dandy* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2012).

much is to be seen in navigating and representing such diverse perspectives in scholarship.

In studies of Mormons in Central America, it can be difficult to compare and focus on Indigenous peoples and their experiences especially if limited to English-language sources. Various Spanish-language publications have been developed and produced in Mexico.<sup>34</sup> In English publications, often labelled “Mormons in Mexico,” the discussion primarily centers on white Mormon settlements and colonies in Mexico.<sup>35</sup> Thomas Murphy marked a major shift by examining dynamics of Indigenous identities in Mormon communities of Mexico and Central America, which such scholars as Elisa Pulido, Stuart Parker, and LaMond Tullis have followed.<sup>36</sup> Pulido offers “insight into the power struggles

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34. See Raymundo Gómez González and Sergio Pagaza Castillo, *El águila mormón o el anarquista cristiano: Plotino Constantino Rhodakanaty, primer miembro de la Iglesia de Jesu Cristo de los Santos de los Ultimos Días en México* (México, D.F.: Museo de Historia del Mormonismo en México, 1997). González and Castillo examine the narrative of a Greek immigrant, Rhodakanaty, who would become the first branch president in Mexico. Although Rhodakanaty was not considered Indigenous, his experiences illuminate some Indigenous Mormon interactions such as his work with founding a school for Indians and peasants. See also Margito Bautista, *La evolución de Mexico: sus verdaderos progenitores y su origen; el destino de America y Europa* (Mexico: Talleres Graficos Laguna, 1935); Agricol Lozano Herrera, *Historia del mormonismo en México* (Mexico, D.F.: Editorial Zarahemla, 1983); and César Ceriani Cernadas, *Nuestros hermanos lamanitas: Indios y fronteras en la imaginación mormona* (Buenos Aires: Editorial Biblos, 2008). There is also a source in Dutch about Mormonism in Costa Rica. Henri Gooren, “De Expanderende Mormoonse Kerk in Latijns Amerika: Schetsen Uit Een Wijk in San José, Costa Rica” [The Expanding Mormon Church in Latin America: Sketching from a Neighborhood in San José, Costa Rica] (MA thesis, University of Utrecht, 1991).

35. See, for example, Nelle Spilsbury Hatch, *Colonia Juarez: An Intimate Account of a Mormon Village* (Salt Lake City: Desert Book Company, 1954); F. LaMond Tullis, *Mormons in Mexico: The Dynamics of Faith and Culture* (Logan: Utah State University Press, 1987); Thomas Cottam Romney, *The Mormon Colonies in Mexico* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1938); and Byron James McNeil, “The History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Mexico” (MA thesis, San Jose State University, 1990).

36. See Thomas Murphy, “From Racist Stereotype to Ethnic Identity: Instrumental Uses of Mormon Racial Doctrine,” *Ethnohistory* 46, no. 3 (Summer 1999): 451. The author expresses special thanks to Murphy for recommending various sources regarding Mormon studies in Central America.

between LDS Church hierarchy and indigenous Latter-day Saints in Mexico,” from 1936 to 1946, when dissidents of the “Third Convention” rejoined the church after a major schism.<sup>37</sup> Parker delves into the writings of Margarito Bautista Valencía, a Nahua Mormon who identified as a Lamanite and engaged in “the discourse of *indigenismo*” during the early twentieth century in Mexico.<sup>38</sup> Tullis focuses on an Indigenous “subnationality” of southeastern Mexico, the growing network of Tzotzil-speaking Mayan Mormons, in the state of Chiapas since the 1980s.<sup>39</sup> As Murphy and scholars like Fernando Rogelio Gómez Páez have demonstrated, individuals and communities with Indigenous ties have related to Lamanite identities on their own terms.<sup>40</sup>

Gina Colvin and Joanna Brooks edited *Decolonizing Mormonism: Approaching a Postcolonial Zion* (2018), in which scholars reframe and reposition Mormon narratives from experiences and insights of historically marginalized peoples. Such an approach deconstructs and exposes forms of colonization that have suppressed such voices in Mormon

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37. Elisa Pulido, “Solving Schism in Napanla: The Third Convention Returns to the LDS Fold,” in *Just South of Zion: The Mormons in Mexico and Its Borderlands*, ed. Jason H. Dormady and Jared M. Tamez (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2015), 89–90. See also Thomas W. Murphy, “‘Stronger Than Ever’: Remnants of the Third Convention,” *Journal of Latter Day Saint History* 10 (1998): 8–11.

38. Stuart Parker, “Queso y gusanos: The Cosmos of Indigenous Mormon Intellectual Margarito Bautista,” in Dormady and Tamez, *Just South of Zion*, 114–15, 118. Concerning Lamanite identities in Mexico, see Thomas W. Murphy, “Other Mormon Histories: Lamanite Subjectivity in Mexico,” *Journal of Mormon History* 26, no. 2 (Fall 2000): 179–214; and Lozano, *Historia del Mormonismo en México*, in which Lozano asserts and intertwines his Nahua and Lamanite identities with Mexican history. Jared Tamez has also presented and written about Indigenous Mormon experiences and Lamanite identities in Mexico and Latin America. See, for example, Jared Tamez, “Indians, Mestizos, and Parley P. Pratt’s Chilean Mission,” *Journal of Mormon History* 37, no. 1 (Winter 2011): 200.

39. LaMond Tullis, “Tzotzil-Speaking Mormon Maya in Chiapas, Mexico,” *Journal of Mormon History* 43, no. 2 (April 2017): 189.

40. Fernando Rogelio Gómez Páez, *The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the Lamanite Conventions: From Darkness to Light* (Mexico City: Museo de Historia del Mormonismo en México, 2004); Murphy, “Other Mormon Histories,” 186–87; and Murphy, “From Racist Stereotype to Ethnic Identity,” 451.

realms. The first part of the volume, “First, We Name Our Experience: Indigenous Mormonisms,” includes three chapters based on Mormon Indigenous narratives in North America by Murphy, Boxer, and Angelo Baca.<sup>41</sup> In the afterword, P. Jane Hafen asserts that “Mormon origins of the human experience, as determined by canonical texts and temple rituals, collide with oral and indeterminate indigenous origins of not only humanity, but all living beings.”<sup>42</sup> Hafen and fellow contributors to the volume call upon their own journeys to undermine the colonizing frameworks that have constrained Indigenous identity in the church.

While some scholars have described Native Mormon lives in terms of binaries and the clash of two worlds defined by race, we can rather focus on how these Indigenous peoples linked diverse communities. We can assess not only their decisions as individuals but also as representatives of multiple groups that affiliated along intersecting lines of race, gender, ethnicity, and religion.<sup>43</sup> Indigenous Mormons sometimes bridged different communities by centering on the overlaps between them, although such connections could be tense and delicate. In some cases, they prioritized certain communities and identities; and they may have adhered to dominant social constructs of race and ethnicity.

Many of them acted in the context of Mormon entanglements with settler colonialism. The ISPP and similar Mormon programs stemmed from the historical hegemony of the US and descendants of Euro-American settlers that displaced and dispossessed Indigenous peoples, but those programs affected Natives in diverse and sometimes unexpected ways.<sup>44</sup> Many Indigenous peoples of North and Central America made

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41. In Colvin and Brooks, *Decolonizing Mormonism*, see Thomas Murphy, “Decolonization on the Salish Sea: A Tribal Journey back to Mormon Studies,” 47–66; Angelo Baca, “Porter Rockwell and Samuel the Lamanite Fistfight in Heaven: A Mormon Navajo Filmmaker’s Perspective,” 67–76; and Boxer, “‘This is the Place!’” 77–99.

42. P. Jane Hafen, afterword to Colvin and Brooks, *Decolonizing Mormonism*, 263.

43. Consider studies and conceptualizations of intersectionality. See Ange-Marie Hancock, *Intersectionality: An Intellectual History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 4.

44. See Garrett, *Making Lamanites*; Boxer, “‘To Become White and Delightful’”; Gina Colvin, “Introduction: Theorizing Mormon Race Scholarship,” *Journal of Mormon History* 41, no. 3 (July 2015): 16; and Jacobs, “Entangled Histories,” 30. Jacobs refers to

choices to not only survive but thrive in the aftermath and perpetual cycles of violent settler colonialism and power dynamics. Some individuals decided to join the church with faith and empowerment to enrich their people and families despite how Mormons racialized their identities.<sup>45</sup> Moroni Benally claims that the “Book of Mormon functions as both a tool of invasion and replacement, but also, strangely, as an instrument of resistance against the Church itself.”<sup>46</sup> Whether they understood the Book of Mormon and church as forms of conformity or resistance, some Indigenous Mormons believed that they were part of revitalizing an exceptional race—Lamanites—the lineage of Lehi and Abraham.<sup>47</sup>

Stanley Thayne examines Indigenous Mormons’ interpretations and appropriations of Lamanite identities and LDS doctrine among Catawba, Shoshone, and the Confederated Blackfoot nations of the US and Canada.<sup>48</sup> Thayne’s work bridges the gaps of understanding Indigenous Mormon experiences across borders in North America. His forthcoming chapter, “Blackfoot Mormon Borderlands: The Kainai Nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy and the Mormon Settlement of Cardston,” will feature First Nations’ experiences as Mormons and their entanglements with Mormon settler colonialism in Canadian territories.<sup>49</sup> Understanding Indigenous Mormonisms also relies on connecting

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“intimate entanglements” of Navajos and Mormons to trace Mormon forms of “Indian child removal” over a couple centuries. See also McPherson, Dandy, and Burak, *Navajo Tradition, Mormon Life*.

45. For more about church forms of racialization involving American Indians and Indigenous peoples, see Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children*; Aikau, *A Chosen People*; and Colvin, “Theorizing Mormon Race Scholarship,” 11–21.

46. Moroni Benally, “Decolonizing the Blossoming: Indigenous People’s Faith in a Colonizing Church,” *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 50, no. 4 (Winter 2017): 74.

47. For more about these conceptualizations and their historical context, see Mauss, *All Abraham’s Children*, 74–75.

48. Thayne, “The Blood of Father Lehi.”

49. Stanley Thayne, “Blackfoot Mormon Borderlands: The Kainai Nation of the Blackfoot Confederacy and the Mormon Settlement of Cardston,” in “Race, Gender, and Power in Mormon Borderlands,” ed. Andrea Radke-Moss and Dee Garceau.

forms of conversion and practices among local, native communities. Thomas W. Murphy delves into such interpretations and approaches in his studies of Guatemalan congregations and their exchange and lived experiences of Mormon conversion and teachings.<sup>50</sup>

The church built its headquarters on the homelands of Utes, engulfing white Mormon settlers, Native Americans, and Indigenous Mormon converts in conflicts and violence during the nineteenth century.<sup>51</sup> Efforts to assimilate Indians and terminate tribal sovereign status continued through the twentieth century and arguably into the twenty-first century, especially through struggles over schooling, education, land, and resources.<sup>52</sup> In some cases, however, the church and its programs strengthened tribal and Indigenous ties and identities. Indigenous Mormons have created and fostered their own communities, which remain as church networks spanning vast distances and generations that connect North and Central America. As my father once stressed to me in the storytelling of Indigenous Mormon experiences, there are some who do not want to discuss the negative experiences; and there are others who only wish to amplify the negatives. In this web of settler colonialism and Indigenous identities, these studies set a path in search of balance that current and future learners can pursue. An essential part of

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50. Thomas W. Murphy, "Guatemalan Hot/Cold Medicine and Mormon Words of Wisdom: Intercultural Negotiation of Meaning," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 36, no. 2 (June 1997): 297; and Thomas Murphy, "Reinventing Mormonism: Guatemala as Harbinger of the Future?" *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1996): 177–92.

51. Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*. See also Christopher C. Smith, "Mormon Conquest: Whites and Natives in the Intermountain West, 1847–1851" (PhD diss., Claremont Graduate University, 2016); Paul Reeve, *Making Space on the Western Frontier*; and Jared Farmer, *On Zion's Mount*.

52. See R. Warren Metcalf, *Termination's Legacy: The Discarded Indians of Utah* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002); Garrett, *Making Lamanites*; Knack, "Interethnic Competition"; and Farina King, *The Earth Memory Compass: Diné Landscapes and Education in the Twentieth Century* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2018). Consider, for example, tensions and controversies over the Bears Ears National Monument in Utah and Utahans efforts to reduce tribal and public lands in the twenty-first century.

these pursuits is working with Indigenous communities to address their questions and heed their voices from past to present—to decolonize and indigenize Mormon studies beyond the simple trope of “Mormons and Indians.”

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