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Massachusetts Bay Colony Seal, 1629

‘Indian Brethren in English Clothes’: The Praying Indian Figure in the *Eliot Tracts*, 1643–1675

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This article focuses on the *Eliot Tracts*, a collection of eleven documents published in London between 1643 and 1671 that describe missionary work by the British among the natives in New England. Written by John Eliot, Thomas Shepard, and other missionaries, these tracts constitute the most detailed and sustained record of early British missionary work in the New World and serve as an important counterpart to earlier accounts by French and Spanish missionaries. Drawing on methods of discourse analysis, this article examines how Puritan missionaries described the converted natives of New England—the so-called Praying Indians—in the *Eliot Tracts*. It shows that the figure of the Praying Indian was constructed as a response to economic, theological, and political pressures within a transatlantic colonial context: New England’s mission rhetoric generated not only support from observers in England and was essential in order to stimulate donations, but also provided a necessary redefinition of the colony’s purpose in the context of the English civil wars. In addition, it allowed the Puritans to redefine their relations with the natives in terms of Christian benevolence and countered accusation about a lack of missionary zeal among the British settlers.

Introduction

One of the reasons the Massachusetts Bay Company gave for colonizing New England was the obligation to convert its native inhabitants to Christianity. The Massachusetts Bay Colony’s charter of 1629 had granted the Governor and his deputies the authority to establish laws

> whereby our said People, Inhabitants there, may be soe religiously, peaceablie, and civilly governed, as their good Life and orderlie Conversacon, maie wynn and incite the Natives of Country, to the Knowledg and Obedience of the onlie true God and Savior of Mankinde, and the Christian Fayth, which in our Royall Intencon, and the Adventurers free Profession, is the principall Ende of this Plantacion.[1]

[1] Francis Newton Thorpe, “The Federal and State Constitutions Colonial Charters, and Other Organic Laws of the States, Territories, and Colonies Now or Heretofore Forming the United States of America.” Compiled and Edited Under the Act of Congress of June 30, 1906

The colony's seal, which depicted a native figure pleading with the English to "come over and help us," further reinforced this claim. Nevertheless, during the 1620s and 1630s, the Puritan settlers devoted little effort to the proselytization of the Algonquian-speaking people of that region, focusing instead on expanding their towns and farms.

Effective missionary work in New England only began in October 1646, when Puritan minister John Eliot began preaching to a local Algonquian community and thus paved the way for a missionary program. In order to raise funds for this work in New England and to publicize it as part of the fulfillment of the colony's charter, a number of tracts were published in London between 1643 and 1671. These consisted of different documents, ranging from letters describing the missionaries' work, and accounts of observers and commentators from both England and the colonies to records of the confessions of natives, and a multitude of dedications. The tracts were not treated as a coherent sequence as they appeared and quality of the original publications varied widely. Today, these works are collectively known as the *Eliot Tracts* because Eliot not only published the majority of them but was also most closely associated with the missionary project.[2] While some of the early tracts were published independently, most of them were collected and printed by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New England (later known as the New England Company) established by the English Parliament in 1649 to support missionary work in New England.

The *Eliot Tracts* constitute a detailed account of early British missionary work in the New World and serve as an important counterpart to earlier accounts by French and Spanish missionaries. Despite their social and political importance for the role of New England in the transatlantic context of British colonialism, they have received relatively little attention from scholars. The most notable exception is Richard W. Cogley's *John Eliot's Mission the Indians before King Philip's War* (1999), which offers an overview on Eliot's missionary work among the natives with an emphasis on his theological writings.[3] Worth mentioning is also William Kellaway's *The New England Company 1649–1776* (1962). Interpreting the British sources relating to the New England mission, this work presents a detailed account of the organization and administration within the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel.[4] Older works, such as Alden T. Vaughan's *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620–1675* (1965), often had a tendency

(Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1909). Accessed August 16, 2017, http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th century/mass03.asp.

[2] Michael P. Clark, "Introduction", in *The Eliot Tracts: With Letters from John Eliot to Thomas Thorowgood and Richard Baxter*, ed. Michael P. Clark (Westport: Praeger, 2003), 1–52. Clark was the first to publish these eleven works together in 2003; the majority of these works have not been reprinted since the nineteenth century.

[3] Richard W. Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians before King Philip's War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1999).

[4] William Kellaway, *The New England Company 1649–1776: Missionary Society to the American Indians* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1962).

to exclude missionaries from the expansionist policies of New England and to portray their motives as benign and honorable.[5] Around ten years later, historians like Francis Jennings, Neil Salisbury, Robert J. Berkhofer, and James Axtell contested Vaughan's thesis and situated the Puritan missionaries in a broader context of British colonialism in New England.[6] Even later, Dane Morrison and Jean M. O'Brien focused on the native perspective on the missionary project. Morrison's work *A Praying People* (1995) shows how the Massachusett tribe experienced conversion and stresses native agency; whereas O'Brien's *Dispossession by Degrees* (2003) focuses on how the native community in Natick resisted colonialism and defended its lands.[7] Beginning around 2000, literary theorists like Kristina Bross and Hilary Wyss have also turned their attentions towards the *Eliot Tracts*. While these works demonstrate the importance of adding literary analysis to the historical approach, Bross and Wyss primarily focus on a later period and largely ignore the early years of the missionary project.[8]

This article then aims at uncovering a part of this overlooked history by examining how Puritan missionaries described the converted natives—the so-called Praying Indians—in the *Eliot Tracts*. I follow Kristina Bross and James Holstun in their assessment that we have to "understand Indian mission policy as fundamentally constructed in relation to Puritan theology rather than simply as a product of Indian and English contact".[9] The figure of the Praying Indian then, I argue, was constructed in a similar way in response to economic, theological, and political pressures within a transatlantic colonial context: The construction of the Praying Indian figure helped to win the favor of an English audience (rather than a New English one) and was essential in order to stimulate further donations for the missionary project. In addition, it allowed the Puritans to redefine their rela-

[5] Alden T. Vaughan, *New England Frontier: Puritans and Indians, 1620–1675* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1965).

[6] Francis Jennings, *The Invasion of America: Indians, Colonialism, and the Cant of Conquest* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1975); Neal Salisbury, "Red Puritans: The 'Praying Indians' of Massachusetts Bay and John Eliot," *The William and Mary Quarterly* 31, no. 1 (1974): 27–54; Neal Salisbury, *Manitou and Providence: Indians, Europeans, and the Making of New England, 1500–1643* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Robert F. Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Knopf, 1978); James Axtell, *The Invasion Within: The Contest of Cultures in Colonial North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

[7] Dane Morrison, *A Praying People: Massachusett Acculturation and the Failure of the Puritan Mission, 1600–1690* (New York: Peter Lang, 1995); Jean M. O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees: Indian Land and Identity in Natick, Massachusetts 1650–1790* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003).

[8] Kristina Bross, "'That Epithet of Praying': The Praying Indian Figure in Early New England Literature" (PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1997); Kristina Bross, *Dry Bones and Indian Sermons: Praying Indians in Colonial America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004); Hilary E. Wyss, *Writing Indians: Literacy, Christianity, and Native Community in Early America* (Amherst and Boston: University of Massachusetts Press, 2000).

[9] Bross, "'That Epithet of Praying,'" 10. See also: James Holstun, *A Rational Millennium: Puritan Utopias of Seventeenth-Century England and America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 104.

tions with the natives in terms of Christian benevolence, thus assuming a positive self-identity on the international stage.

The time period between the publication of the first tract in 1643 and 1675 is of great importance as it is demarked by two turning points in the history of Aboriginal-European relations: the Pequot War from 1636 to 1638 and Metacom's War, which lasted from 1675 to 1678. During the 1620s and early 1630s, the territory of Southern New England was dominated by the Pequot, who had subjugated dozens of other tribes. With the arrival of English traders and settlers, tensions over power and control of trade escalated, and finally led to the defeat of the Pequot by an alliance of the colonists of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and the Mohegan and Narragansett tribes in 1638. The Pequot War ended the political and economic dominance of the Pequot tribe in Southern New England and permanently shifted the balance of power from the natives to the colonists.[10] The dominance of the colonists should only be threatened again in 1675 when Metacom, sachem of the Wampanoag people, led half of New England's native population against the colonists. Around 5,000 natives were killed, which constituted approximately 40 percent of the natives in Southern New England. About half that many settlers died, roughly five to six percent of the English population.[11] By analyzing Puritan descriptions of natives in that relatively peaceful time period between these two wars, this article thus contributes to a broader discourse that analyzes early images of the native in New England. While the Praying Indian was constructed as a rather positively loaded term, Metacom's War led to a vilification of the Indian figure as all natives came to be depicted as inherently evil.[12]

I begin my article with an overview on the origins of the missionary project in New England, before I take a closer look at the *Eliot Tracts*. Drawing on methods of discourse analysis, I focus on how Eliot and other Puritan missionaries constructed the Praying Indian figure. Information about the Praying Indians is obviously filtered through the Eurocentric lens of the New England authors, and, moreover, subordinated to the religious objectives of the missionaries' work, and must therefore be treated with considerable skepticism. Even though my article focuses on the missionaries' perspectives, I emphasize the intentional constructed nature of the Praying Indian figure, thus trying to avoid mistaking these discursive features for "authentic native" characteristics.[13] In the second part of the article, I take a closer look at the economic, theological, and political factors that contributed to the construction of the Praying Indian figure in the *Eliot Tracts*.

[10] Vaughan, *New England Frontier*, 152.
[11] Clark, "Introduction," 22.
[12] See: Berkhofer, *The White Man's Indian*, 83–85.
[13] See also: Wyass, *Writing Indians*, 11.

The Origins of the Missionary Project in New England

The first attempts to evangelize the natives of New England were made on Martha's Vineyard in 1643 when Thomas Mayhew Jr. began preaching to the Wampanoag on the island that his father had colonized one year earlier. The Mayhews however, largely acted without official support or notice, and systematic missionary effort only began in 1646. Historians commonly cite several reasons to explain this delay to the mission: The earliest settlers were confronted with problems of survival and focused on more pressing concerns in their lives such as the construction of towns. Additional problems were created by the lack of ministers who were able to master the Algonquian dialects, and by the poor infrastructure conditions.[14]

Furthermore, it was only in 1644 that five sachems formally submitted themselves and their people to the jurisdiction of the Massachusetts General Court. The agreement also included an explicit willingness "to be instructed in the knowledge and worship of God".[15] While the reasons for this "voluntary" subjugation were complex and are still debated by historians, it is certain that it presented a strategy of survival for some native groups: The Alqonquian-speaking natives in the Boston area had suffered through two major epidemics, the first lasting from 1616 to 1619, the second from 1633 to 1634. The two epidemics had a devastating impact on the natives, killing up to 90 percent of its pre-contact population. The population of the Massachusett tribe, once numbering around 25,000 people, dropped to just 750 in 1631 and was even further reduced by the smallpox epidemic of 1633–1634. The settler population of Massachusetts alone in contrast, had reached 20,000 in 1646.[16] For some native groups, submission to English jurisdiction then must be understood as a pragmatic solution to changing power relations, threats from native enemies to the south and northwest, and British land claims. It is therefore hardly surprising that the missionary project was appealing to small and weak tribes like the Massachusett or Nipmuc; whereas stronger tribes such the Mohegan under the leadership of their sachem Uncas formed political alliances with the English but resisted all missionary efforts.[17]

In October 1646, John Eliot was selected to give the first missionary sermon to a group of Massachusett at Dorchester Mill near the native village of Nonantum. Eliot was born in Widford, England in 1604 and attended Jesus College at Cambridge. He received his bachelor's degree in 1622 and worked as schoolteacher before he emigrated to the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1631. Serving as a min-

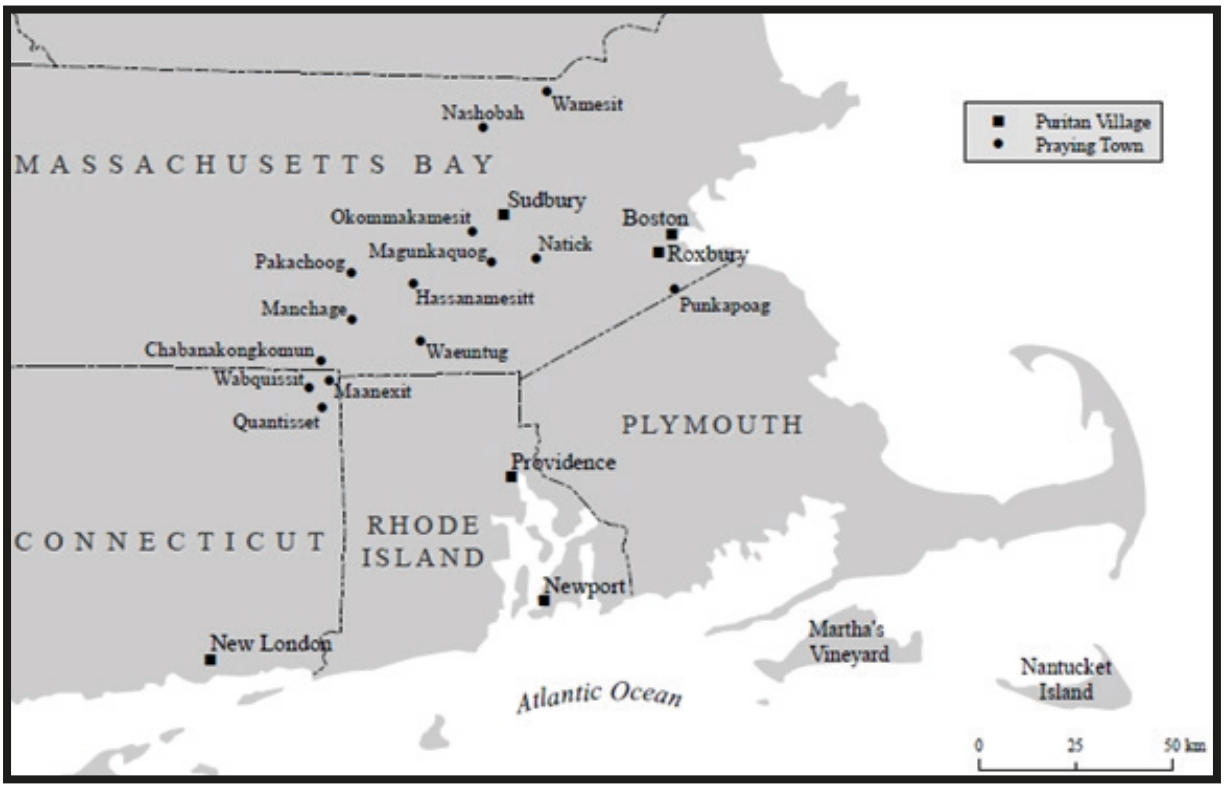
[14] Anonymous [Thomas Weld, Hugh Peter, and Henry Dunster (?)], *New Englands First Fruits, in respect, First of the Conversion of Some, Conviction of Divers, Preparation of sundry of the Indians …* (London, 1643). Reprinted in Clark, *Eliot Tracts,* 58. See also: Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission*, 21–22.
[15] Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission*, 28.
[16] Ibid., 31–32; Axtell, *The Invasion Within*, 219–20.
[17] Salisbury, "Red Puritans", 38–39.

ister to the English at the church at Roxbury until his death in 1690, Eliot divided his time between his ministry and missionary work to the natives. A number of those assisting him in missionary work among the Massachusett were similarly pastors of English churches in Massachusetts Bay: John Wilson and William Leverich were pastors in Boston; Thomas Shepard at Cambridge.[18]

John Eliot and the other missionaries believed that the natives needed to receive the word of God in their own language and therefore produced printed books in the Algonquian language. In 1663, a translation of the Bible, the *Mamusse Wunneetupanatamwe Up-Biblum God*, was published, followed by translations of other sermons.[19] Funds were not only needed to pay for these publications but for Eliot's salary and supplies as well as for educational programs for native children. New England settlers however, were reluctant to donate for the proselytization of native people. Following the Pequot War of 1637, a large number of white settlers perceived the natives as hostile.[20] Because of this resistance, missionaries in the Puritan colonies were financially dependent on charity from England.

In order to raise funds and to report the successes of the mission to its supporters in England, the "Act for the promoting and propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in New England" was passed by the English Parliament on 13 June 1649.[21] It established a corporation in England consisting of 16 people, mostly wealthy merchants, named "The President and Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in New-England"—the first Protestant missionary organization in the world. Of all activities supported by the Society, the most historically significant was the construction of settlements for all native proselytes in Massachusetts Bay, which became known as "Praying Towns". The mobility of many tribes was often considered one of the greatest obstacles to their conversion and a fixed settlement was seen as the first step to the conversion of the natives—similar to the French Catholic reserve system.[22] In 1651, the first Praying Town, Natick, was created. Although Natick remained the most famous of the Praying Indian towns, 13 additional towns were created in the Bay colony by 1675. According to Daniel Gookin, who was later appointed the first superintendent of the Praying Indians, each of the Praying Towns had about 70 to 90 inhabitants, for a total of 1,000 residents in all Praying Towns combined.[23]

[18] Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission*, 45–47.
[19] Wyass, *Writing Indians*, 21–22.
[20] Salisbury, "Red Puritans," 29. See also: Horst Gründer. "John Eliot und die 'Praying Indians': Vom Scheitern einer Puritanischen Mission in Neuengland,"*Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 5, no. 2 (1992): 210–222.
[21] Bross has pointed out that in 1649, Charles I. was executed and Parliament "found itself free to legislate as it wished." Bross, "'That Epithet of Praying,'" 29.
[22] Ulrike Kirchberger, *Konversion zur Moderne? Die britische Indianermission in der atlantischen Welt des 18. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2008), 115.
[23] Daniel Gookin, "The Historical Collections of the Indians in New England, 1674," in *Massachusetts Historical Society Collections, vol. 1, 1792* (Boston: Munroe and Francis, 1806), 180-196. See also: O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees*, 81.



Southern New England. Map by the Author

Praying Indians and Wicked Indians

New Englands First Fruits, today known as the first of the *Eliot Tracts*, defends New England's settlers against charges that they had been lacking in missionary zeal, and recounts several instances of native interest in Christianity. The early converts are pictured as "more courteous, ingenious, and to the English more loving than others of them," they "desired to learne and speake [the English] language", and they "are very inquisitive after God." One of the converts even refuses to be called by "Indian name, but would be named William," and "abhorre[s] to dwell with the Indians any longer."[24]

While the authors of the first tract celebrate converts' attempts to imitate the Puritans in "behaviour and apparrell," they also establish a clear dichotomy between themselves and the colonial other: while the natives (at least prior to conversion) "goe naked"[25] and lead an "unfixed, confused, and ungoverned a life, uncivilized and unsubdued to labor and order,"[26] English settlers not only wear clothes but on the whole come to represent civilization and order. This simplistic dichotomy (us – them; Christianity – lack of religion; civilized – uncivilized) is even further enforced by a number of linguistic devices, which are employed throughout the

[24] Anonymous, *New Englands First Fruits*, 59–60.
[25] Ibid., 60.
[26] Edward Winslow, ed., *The Glorious Progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians of New England* (London, 1649). Reprinted in Clark, *Eliot Tracts*, 159.

Eliot Tracts: the unconverted natives are linked to evilness and sin, and frequently pray to the devil,[27] whereas the Puritans are constructed as their antithesis and become embodiments of "holiness" and "righteousness."[28] Metaphors revolving around "light" and "darkness" also figure prominently in the missionaries' writings.[29]

The standard adjective, however, to describe the natives—whether converted or not—is "poor": natives are labeled "poor Indians" and "poor outcasts," and are furthermore characterized as "deepest degeneracies," "the dregs or mankinde," or "the saddest spectacles of misery of meere men upon earth."[30] The missionaries make clear that the natives are in "vast distance […] from common civility" and thus are in continual need of English guidance and support. The authors of the *Eliot Tracts* were convinced that the natives could only be converted after they have reached a certain stage of "civility."[31] Even though these characterizations sound condescending to a modern reader, Richard Cogley argues that Eliot's choice of words "indicates that he viewed the natives with sympathy and not contempt." While some of his contemporaries characterized the natives as "animals" or "beasts", Eliot did not deny their humanity—even though he was convinced of the Puritan's superiority.[32]

Praying Indians, however, are not only different from the English but also from those natives who refuse to give up their traditional ways. As early as September 1647, John Eliot separates the natives in two categories: the Praying Indians "who would be all one English" and the "other wicked Indians."[33] The term "wicked" can be found throughout the *Eliot Tracts* but other adjectives such as "prophane" or "unsound" are sometimes used as well.[34] In 1649, Eliot for example reports that "Linn Indians are all naught save one […] and the reason why they are bad is, partly and principally because their Sachim is naught, and careth not to pray unto God (Bad Governours have an evill inflence upon the people)."[35] While the

[27] See for example: Henry Whitfield, ed., *The Light appearing more and more towards the perfect Day, or a farther discovery of the present state of the Indians in New England* (London, 1651). Reprinted in Clark, *Eliot Tracts*, 209; John Eliot and Thomas Mayhew, Jr., *Tears of Repentance: Or, A further Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians in New-England* (London, 1653). Reprinted in Clark, *Eliot Tracts*, 288; John Eliot, *A further Account of the progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians in New* England (London, 1660). Reprinted in Clark, *Eliot Tracts*, 373.

[28] Eliot and Mayhew, *Tears of Repentance*, 258.

[29] Thomas Shepard, *The Clear Sun-shine of the Gospel breaking forth upon the Indians in New-England* (London, 1648). Reprinted in Clark, *Eliot Tracts*, 107.

[30] Anonymous [Thomas Shepard (?)], *The Day-Breaking, if not the Sun-Rising of the Gospell with the Indians in New England* (London, 1647). Reprinted in Clark, *Eliot Tracts*, 92–93.

[31] "So in religion such as are extreamly degenerate, must bee brought to some civility before religion can prosper, or the word take place." Anonymous, *The Day Breaking*, 93.

[32] Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission*, 247.

[33] Shepard, *Clear Sun-shine of the Gospel*, 124–125.

[34] See for example: John Eliot, *A Brief Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel amongst the Indians in New England, in the Year 1670*. London, 1671. Reprinted in Clark, *Eliot Tracts*, 404.

[35] Winslow, ed., *The Glorious Progress of the Gospel*, 158.

natives in general are characterized as eager to learn more about Christ, it is their "naught" sachems that present an obstacle to the conversion. Even worse than the sachems, however, are the native shamans—referred to as "Powwaws." They are presented as "Sorcerers and Witches,"[36] "that cure by help of the devil."[37]

The Praying Indians then occupy a middle ground between the English and the unconverted, "wicked Indians." The tracts report that the powwows "mock and scoffe at those Indians which pray, and blaspheme God when they pray"[38]; on the other hand, however, English cattle frequently destroyed the natives' corn and conflicts over the settlements' boundaries led to an atmosphere of mutual distrust.[39] In a postscript to *Clear Sun-shine of the Gospel* pastor Thomas Shepard quotes one of the converted natives named Wampooas, who reflects on the Praying Indian identity: "That is because wee pray to God, other Indians abroad in the countrey hate us and oppose us, the English on the other side suspect us, and feare us to be still such as doe not pray at all […]."[40]

Intertribal conflicts between converts and those loyal to traditional ways also seem to have occurred frequently: one of Massachusetts Bay's first and most prominent converts, Wequash, was poisoned by "some of the Indians, whose hearts Satan had filled" and others were threatened with a similar fate.[41] The Praying Towns also faced serious threats from the Iroquois confederation in northern New York. Especially the Mohawk, the most feared tribe within this confederation, began raiding the Praying Towns Nashobah and Wamesit in the 1650s. In 1671, Eliot wrote that he planned to arm the inhabitants of these Praying Towns for their own protection during these dangerous times, which stirred feelings of fear and suspicion among the English settlers.[42]

Eliot and the other missionaries also differentiate between "two sorts of English men": "Some are bad and naught, and live wickedly and loosely […] but there are a second sort of English men, who […] repenting of their sinnes, and seeking after God and Jesus Christ, they are good men."[43] Thus, the adjective "wicked" applies not only to natives but to sinning English settlers as well. Other authors take one step further by attaching the term "Indian" to those sinning settlers. In *Strength out of Weaknesse*, William Leverich writes: "There is no difference between the worst Indians, and such English, saying, they are all one Indians"—thus it seems that the term "Indian" itself has become a signifier for evil and wickedness.[44] In

[36] Anonymous, *The Day Breaking*, 96.
[37] Shepard, *Clear Sun-shine of the Gospel*, 115. See also: ibid., 97 and 125 for a more detailed description.
[38] Ibid., 125.
[39] O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees*, 33.
[40] Shepard, *Clear Sun-shine of the Gospel*, 136.
[41] Anonymous, *New Englands First Fruits*, 62. See also: Salisbury, "Red Puritans," 40.
[42] Morrison, *A Praying People*, 157–158.
[43] Anonymous, *The Day Breaking*, 85–86.
[44] Henry Whitfield, ed., *Strength out of Weaknesse, Or a Glorious Manifestation of the Further Progresse of the Gospel among the Indians in New England* (London, 1652). Reprinted in

The Light appearing more and more, Eliot even evokes a scenario in which the roles of Puritans and natives are completely reversed:

> These Indians will rise up in judgment against us and our children at the last day. Brethren, the Lord has no need of us, but if it please him, can carry his Gospel to the other side of the world, and make it there to shine forth in its glory, brightnesse, power and purity, and leave us in Indian darknesse.[45]

This scenario then might serve as a warning to the English settlers: natives, who adopt English manners and practices, can "assume an identity which also challenges English spiritual superiority" if the English settlers neglect God's word.[46]

The Financing of the Mission

The "Act for the promoting and propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in New England" of 1649 stated that England had to fund the missions because New England—even though "willing"—was too impoverished to do so. Furthermore, it enacted that a collection should be taken up in all the "counties, cities, towns and parishes of England and Wales" to support the mission in New England:

> The Ministers and Church wardens or Overseers of the poor of every such Parish and place … are hereby authorized after the reading hereof, to go with all convenient speed from house to house, to every of the Inhabitants of the said Parishes and places respectively, and to take the subscription of every such person in a schedule to be presented by them for that purpose, and accordingly at the same time to collect and gather the same.[47]

Even though many parishes contributed only comparatively small amounts, the total was impressive: in the first ten years after its establishment the Society raised almost £16,000; an average of £440 per year was directly sent to New England.[48]

However, while the English audience seemed to be generally more sympathetic to the missionary project than the settlers in New England, there was still opposition to collections in England as many critics argued that the money available for the mission should be given to the poor at home.[49] In order to raise more funds, the

Clark, *Eliot Tracts*, 235.

[45] Whitfield, ed., *The Light appearing more and more*, 208.

[46] Bross, "That Epithet of Praying," 34.

[47] *An Act for the promoting and propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in New England*, July 1649, in: *Acts and Ordinances of the Interregnum, 1642–1660*, ed. C. H. Firth and R. S. Rait (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1911), 197–200. Accessed 15 February, 2018, http://www.british-history.ac.uk/no-series/acts-ordinances-interregnum/pp197-200.

[48] Kellaway, *The New England Company*, 14–15. Figures from ibid., 38–39.

[49] Alison Stanley, "The Praying Indian Towns: Encounter and Conversion through Imposed Urban Space," in *Building the British Atlantic World: Spaces, Places, and Material Culture,*

Society also began publishing a series of tracts describing the missionary project in New England. By 1649, a certain amount of publicity material was already at hand as *New Englands First Fruits* (1643), *The Day-Breaking* (1647), *The Clear Sun-shine of the Gospel* (1648), and *The Glorious Progress of the Gospel* (1649) had already been published independently in London. During the following ten years, seven more tracts were published and distributed by the Society, each assuring the reader of the mission's worthiness and progress. The tracts not only stressed the natives' willingness to be converted but also contained constant appeals for financial assistance.[50]

In order to ensure the flow of donations, Eliot and the other missionaries also had to demonstrate proof of the natives' conversion to Christianity and civilization. Outward manifestations of the natives' conversion—such as English-style clothing and housing—provided the missionaries with a possibility to measure their success and to present evidence of the success of the missionary project to their benefactors. Therefore, the Puritan missionaries often demanded visible signs of conversion from the Praying Indians: when Nataôus (who was later baptized as William of Sudbury) tells a Mr. Brown that "[he] will pray to God as long as live," Brown demands proof of his spiritual conversion: "He said, I doubt of it, and bid me cut off my hair."[51] All efforts of the Praying Indians to transform themselves into imitations of English men are applauded: at Eliot's first sermon, he sees the sachem's son, who was educated by the English, "standing by his father among the rest of his Indian brethren in English clothes."[52] In 1648, Thomas Shepard notes at one of his sermons that many natives are dressed like the English and "you would scarce know them from English people."[53] Kristina Bross points out that this exact sight—natives in English-style clothing—had earlier been a cause for concern and even fear as "Indians in the middle ground challenged otherwise clear battlefield boundaries."[54]

Puritan missionaries and their audiences were also occupied with the living situation of the natives: colonial thought had created a dichotomy between towns, which were clearly marked as English spaces, and the unsettled wilderness, which was associated with the natives. The decision to establish towns for the Praying Indians then was largely based on ideological reasons as Alison Stanley points out: "Merely living in a town was seen to be a significant step on the way to becoming Europeanized Christians."[55]

1600–1850, ed. Daniel Maudlin and Bernard L. Herman (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2016), 143; Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission to the Indians*, 208.

[50] See for example: Anonymous, *The Day Breaking*, 99; Shepard, *The Clear Sun-shine of the Gospel*, 110; Winslow, ed., *The Glorious Progress of the Gospel*, 167.

[51] Eliot and Mayhew, *Tears of Repentance*, 273.

[52] Ibid., 83.

[53] Shepard, *Clear Sun-shine of the Gospel*, 120.

[54] Bross, "'That Epithet of Praying,'" 48.

[55] Stanley, "The Praying Indian Towns," in Maudlin and Herman, *Building the British Atlantic World*, 145.

Adopting English-style buildings also meant a restructuring of the social structures within those Praying Towns: English-style houses were designed for nuclear families and a law imposed on the Praying Indians of Natick in 1647 required "every young man if not anothers servant, and if unmarried, hee shall be compelled to set up a Wigwam and plant for himselfe" instead of "shifting up and downe to other Wigwams," implying that this had been the case before.[56] The natives were expected to conform to English ideas on gender roles. In Algonquian society, the division of labor ran along gender rather than class lines. Men were largely responsible for hunting, fishing, and making of tools and weapons, while women assumed the work compatible with the supervision of children: gathering of firewood, berries, and herbs, building and maintaining the homes, and working the fields.[57] This division of labor collided with the English ideal where men should work in the fields, while women belonged in the household, raising children, and ideally engaging in some sort of household production such as carding and spinning wool.[58]

Puritan missionaries were interested in presenting their work among the natives as important task in order to stimulate donations from potential benefactors. In order to dramatize their work, natives prior to conversion were often presented as "wicked," "poor," and "degenerate"; and the darker the picture of native wickedness and savagery, the greater the need for missionaries and the more praiseworthy their work. On the other hand, the English audience had to be convinced of the worth of the missionary project and therefore, converted natives were presented in a positive light—they became Praying Indians who were almost like English settlers. The erection of Praying Towns was presented as a productive halfway step to the civilization and conversion of the natives and was thus intended to please the English audiences.

Puritan Missionary Theology

In order to fully understand the construction of the Praying Indian figure, it is important to consider how the Puritans understood their work within a broader framework of millennialist thought at that time. Puritan millenarianism was a form of historical understanding that interpreted recent events through the prophetic calendar based on the Book of Revelation and other books of the Bible, believing that in the end Christ will establish a kingdom on earth that would last for a thousand years. Eliot, like other believers in millenarianism, assumed that

[56] Anonymous, *The Day Breaking*, 98.
[57] See: Alan Taylor, *American Colonies: The Settling of North America* (New York: Viking, 2001), 190–191.
[58] See for example: Shepard, *Clear Sun-shine of the Gospel*, 132: "The women are desirous to learn to spin, and I have procured Wheels for sundry of them, and they can spin pretty well." See also: O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees*, 43–44.

England occupied center stage in this apocalyptic drama, and events in England and New England were viewed as special disclosures of the divine will.[59] In England during the 1640s and 1650s the civil wars, the execution of Charles I, and the disestablishment of the Church of England indicated, that "the time had come for the saints in England to erect the millennial orders for church and state."[60] Furthermore, the Puritans were convinced that God was favoring the English settlers "in sweeping away great multitudes of the Natives by the small Pox a little before we went thither, that he might make room for us there."[61] The English presence in North America was then interpreted as the last step in "the spiritually inevitable westward expansion of Christianity and British rule" before the arrival of Christ.[62]

Eliot's radical interpretations of the events in England also led him to embrace the belief that the New England natives were descended from the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel, a theory that was first discussed in 16th century Spain, and gained popularity in England during the 1640s and 1650s.[63] Eliot suggested that the descendants of Shem had migrated to North America via an overland route that led them first to India and China and, finally, America.[64] While this theory was rejected by the majority of the other authors in the tract, who instead believed that the natives were "Tartars passing out of Asia into America,"[65] Eliot's unique view led to a feeling of "millennial urgency": according to Puritan millennialist theory, Christ's kingdom on earth would only be established after the general conversion of the Jews to Christianity.[66] The successful conversion of Praying Indians, who in addition were of Hebraic ancestry, then could be interpreted as a sign of Christ's coming.

The emergence of the Praying Indian figure also coincides with a feeling of crisis in England during the 1640s and 1650s. The beginning of the civil wars in England in 1642 had taken its toll on New England and the supply of goods, money, and immigrants came to a halt.[67] Even worse, large numbers of New Englanders were called back to England to take part in the civil wars. Out of 24 Harvard students who graduated between 1642 and 1646 for example, 14 returned to England or Ireland.[68] The Puritan persecution in England had ended with the arrest and execution of Anglican bishop William Laud in the 1640s, and migration to

[59] Cogley, "John Eliot and the Millennium," 228–229.
[60] Ibid., 227–228.
[61] Anonymous, *New Englands First Fruits*, 74.
[62] Clark, "Introduction," 25.
[63] Kirchberger, *Konversion zur Moderne?*, 158.
[64] See for example: Winslow, ed., *The Glorious Progress of the Gospel*, 164. See also: Cogley, *Eliot's Mission to the Indians*, 86.
[65] Anonymous, *The Day Breaking*, 92.
[66] Richard W. Cogley, "John Eliot and the Millennium,"*Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation* 1, no. 2 (1991): 227–50, 229.
[67] Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 184–185.
[68] Ibid., 184–185; Bross, "'That Epithet of Praying,'" 22.

New England, once a righteous response to the situation in England, now "seemed a poor choice" as Kristina Bross phrases it.[69] Instead of contributing to the erection of a holy commonwealth in England after the execution of Charles I, Puritans in New England now felt that they were missing the main event, which according to Andrew Delbanco caused a Puritan "crisis of identity."[70] An increased focus on the evangelization of the natives and the construction of the Praying Indian figure then provided a necessary redefinition of New England's purpose in the context of the English civil wars.

The International Context of the New England Mission

The first of the tracts, *First Fruits* recalls the atrocities committed against the indigenous people by the Spanish in order to advocate what Kristina Bross calls the "anti-conquest" theme of the English missionary project.[71] The Puritan authors emphasize that—unlike the Spanish—the English had occupied the land without violence and were welcomed by the natives.[72] Just five years after the Pequot War, New England is described as a place of "such peace and freedome from enemies, when almost all the world is on a fire that (excepting that short trouble with the Pequits) we never heard of any sound of Warres to this day."[73] For the author, the victory over the Pequot (and the "genocidal rage" that came with it) are presented as necessary for the missionary undertaking:[74] Wequash, one of the early converts, was finally convinced of the Christian God's power after he witnessed the massacre at Mystic River.[75] Eliot also recalls the story of "an Indian […] taken in the Pequott Warres," who is "ingenious, can read," learnt to write and later became Eliot's translator and a firm believer.[76] After the Pequot War, Puritans thus redefined their relations with the natives in terms of Christian benevolence, rewriting the objective of their settlement around the evangelization of the natives and around the figure of the Praying Indian. Praying Indians came to symbolize the peaceful, benevolent mission strategy and thus reflected positively on New England's self-identity.

[69] Bross, "'That Epithet of Praying,'" 24.
[70] Delbanco, *Puritan Ordeal*, 189.
[71] Bross, "'That Epithet of Praying,'" 14.
[72] "At our entrance upon the Land it was not with violence and intrusion but free and faire, with their consents … the chief Sagamores … professed we were all welcome." Anonymous, *New Englands First Fruits*, 63.
[73] Anonymous, *The Day Breaking*, 74–75.
[74] Clark, "Introduction," 24.
[75] "This man, a few years since, feeling and beholding the mighty power of God in our English Forces, how they fell upon the Pegans [Pequots], where divers hundreds of them were slain in an houre ... from that time he was convinced and perswaded that our God was a most dreadfull God." Anonymous, *New Englands First Fruits*, 61.
[76] Winslow, ed., *The Glorious Progress of the Gospel*, in Clark, *Eliot Tracts*, 160.

Prior to the beginning of the mission in 1646, contemporaries in England had criticized New Englanders for their neglect of the native people and had compared them unfavorably to Catholic missionaries in the Spanish and French colonies, who had started to convert native peoples in the 1540s.[77] In order to counter these accusations, Puritan missionaries contrasted the works of the Catholic missionaries to their own work amongst the natives:

> That when other Nations who have planted in those furthest parts of the Earth, have onely sought their owne advantage to possesse their Land, Transport their gold, and that with so much covetousnesse and cruelty, that they have made the name of Christianitie and of Christ an abomination.[78]

English missionaries on the other hand, had the natives' best interest at heart and were invited by the natives to preach among them. While it is not surprising that Puritan writers would be more favorably disposed towards English than towards Spanish missionaries, descriptions of Spanish atrocities against the natives became an important motif in Puritan missionary writing. In 1552, Dominican friar Bartolomé de las Casas published his work *Brevísima relación de la destrucción de las Indias*, an account about the mistreatment of the indigenous people in the Spanish colonies, which formed the basis for Puritan missionary propaganda.[79]

Furthermore, Catholic conversions were presented as superficial, whereas Puritan converts experience the true knowledge of the Gospel. In an appendix to *The Glorious Progress of the Gospel*, John Dury writes, "The Gospel in its advancement amongst these Western Indians, appears to be not in word only (as it was by the Spaniards among their Indians) but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance."[80] The Puritans argue that they require a full conversion and true knowledge of the gospel from their converts, unlike the Spanish who "force them to baptisme" after "having learnt them a short answer or two to some Popish questions."[81]

The English feeling of coming late to the New World had by the late 16th century led to the development of an aggressive form of proto-nationalism directed against Spain and the Catholic Church more generally as Carl Ortwin Sauer has pointed out.[82] Emphasizing differences between the Catholics and themselves, thus allowed England to take rhetorical advantage of their missionary endeavor.

[77] Bross, "'That Epithet of Praying,'" 25. See also: William R. Hutchison, *Errand to the World: American Protestant Thought and Foreign Mission* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987), 16–17.
[78] Whitfield, ed., *Strength out of Weaknesse*, 218.
[79] Clark, "Introduction," 2–3.
[80] Winslow, ed., *The Glorious Progress of the Gospel*, 165.
[81] Anonymous, *The Day Breaking*, 93.
[82] Carl Ortwin Sauer, *Sixteenth Century North America: The Land and the People as Seen by the Europeans* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 234.

The *Eliot Tracts* then provide evidence of the spiritual superiority of New England's Praying Indians in comparison to the converts in Spanish and French colonies.

Conclusion

The authors of the *Eliot Tracts* established a clear dichotomy between two groups of natives: the Praying Indians, who believed in God, wore clothes, and lived in English-style buildings, and the "wicked Indians," who refused to give up their traditional ways. The efforts of the Praying Indians to transform themselves into English men seem even more praiseworthy when contrasted with the "wickedness" of both unconverted natives and sinning English men.

Taking a closer look the economic, theological, and political factors of the 17th century, it becomes clear that the Praying Indian figure emerged as a response to economic need, millennial enthusiasm, and competing claims over the New World. Puritan writers thus transformed the existing representations of natives as according to their own needs. New England's mission rhetoric generated not only support from observers in England and convinced many to contribute money and goods to the further evangelization of the natives, but also justified England's belated embrace of the missionary work. Furthermore, the emergence of the Praying Indian figure in the *Eliot Tracts* coincided with a perceived feeling of crisis in the early years of the missionary project.

Metacom's War in 1675 forever changed Aboriginal-White Relations in North America: it reinforced English fears towards all natives, even though one fourth of all tribes, and an overwhelming majority of Praying Indians remained loyal to the English. The Praying Indians were interned at Deer Island in Boston Harbor, where many died from disease and starvation in the harsh winter of 1675–76.[83] English hostility towards natives in the aftermath of Metacom's War undermined commitment to the missionary enterprise, and with Eliot's death in 1690, the missionary effort was set back even further.[84] Maybe still more devastating was the dramatic reversal of the Praying Indian figure among the English settlers: while previously differences between Praying Indians and unconverted natives were stressed, this was now overshadowed by the stronger binary opposition between all natives and English settlers.

[83] Cogley, *John Eliot's Mission*, 123.
[84] O'Brien, *Dispossession by Degrees*, 87.