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Counterpoints of Conquest: The Royal Proclamation of 1763,
the Lesser Antilles, and the Ethnographic of Genocide

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This essay is a historical analysis of the Royal Proclamation of October 7, 1763, a foundational legal document of the British Empire after the Seven Years' War. In the Lesser Antilles, in contrast to Canada and the United States, the proclamation has no history as part of an evolving Indigenous constitution. Considering the proclamation from the historical vantage point of these islands reveals it to be worded in such a way as to legislate an Indigenous cultural and geographic zone in North America while enabling Indigenous dispossession and expansion of African enslavement in the Lesser Antilles. The proclamation constructed a counterpoint between a continental world of Indigenous societies and cultures and a set of Caribbean islands with, at best, an ephemeral Indigenous presence. This counterpoint, the origins of which lay in the earliest decades of Spanish American colonialism, shaped European colonization policies in the Lesser Antilles and continental America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The difference between the North American interior and the Lesser Antilles in 1763 can be traced not to the presence or absence of Indigenous people, or the effectiveness of Indigenous resistance, but to the relative strength of imperial commitments to sugar and slavery.