

# READING THE LITERATE ANDEAN PAST

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**Into the Archive: Writing and Power in Colonial Peru.** By Kathryn Burns. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Pp. xv + 247. \$79.95 cloth. \$22.95 paper. ISBN: 9780822348573.

**Indians and Mestizos in the “Lettered City”: Reshaping Justice, Social Hierarchy, and Political Culture in Colonial Peru.** By Alcira Dueñas. Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2010. Pp. xii + 269. \$70.00 cloth. ISBN: 9781607320180.

**In Search of an Inca: Identity and Utopia in the Andes.** By Alberto Flores Galindo. Edited and translated by Carlos Aguirre, Charles F. Walker, and Willie Hiatt. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. xxix + 270. \$75.00 cloth. \$21.99 paper. ISBN: 9780521598613.

**The Lettered Mountain: A Peruvian Village’s Way with Writing.** By Frank Salomon and Mercedes Niño-Murcia. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011. Pp. xv + 368. \$94.95 cloth. \$25.95 paper. ISBN 9780822350279.

Reading the Andean past involves a series of translations. First, like any other historical investigation, we must locate the documents and make sense of them from our own modern vantage point. But, on top of that, when writing the history of native Andeans, we must attempt to read documents from an indigenous perspective, despite the fact that oftentimes they were composed by members of a dominant culture who partially—sometimes completely—obscured the intentions, language, and arguments of the Andeans who participated in some way in their creation. This is an issue upon which many anthropologists, art historians, historians, and literary scholars have fruitfully reflected during the past few decades. In his masterful meditation on the process of writing history, Michel-Rolph Trouillot lists a series of key moments: “the moment of fact creation (the making of *sources*); the moment of fact assembly (the making of *archives*); the moment of fact retrieval (the making of *narratives*); and the moment of retrospective significance (the making of *history* in the final instance).”<sup>1</sup> At each of these moments, the challenge of reading from an Andean vantage point intrudes. Native Andeans have at least partially influenced the sources available to us today, particularly in those instances when they controlled the process of writing documents in their localities. Their archives are different from those of the courts or notarial records of the dominant society because sometimes they include types of information that our society would not accumulate, such as rosters of participants in collec-

1. Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon, 1995), 26.

tive tasks. Moreover, when native Andeans have had occasion to assemble their own evidence, the criteria by which they did so are unique. The facts retrieved in Andean narratives and the ways they are woven into history are also different from Western models.

However, one essential lesson we have learned over the years is that the Andean voice in historical documents is, without question, hybrid. It is the product of transculturation, a process through which cultural referents are transformed by intercultural negotiation, misunderstanding, and reinterpretation by both Andeans and Europeans. It therefore becomes difficult to draw clear boundaries around these two groups in Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, particularly with the rise of mestizo populations in the colonial era and the appropriation of Andean symbols in the construction of nationalist discourses. It is, then, impossible to sustain the notion of a pristine and primordial Andean voice. We must instead look for a colonial, republican, or modern Andean voice in historical documentation, and we must question what is Andean, keeping in mind the historical contingencies in which Andean peoples have found themselves and the influences that they have had on others.

This is particularly true in the area of history making, where, early on, native Andeans adopted European alphabetic literacy, literary and visual conventions, legal discourses, and theological arguments, and entered into sustained communication with nonnative interlocutors who, in turn, borrowed from Andean sources. This is not to say, of course, that Andean forms of inscription completely disappeared from the literate landscape; the *kipu* knot record, for instance, adapted to the colonial environment and was transformed by it, surviving in altered form to the present. But we can say that literate communication furnished a prime stage on which transculturation unfolded.

The four volumes under review expand our understanding of Andean literacy and problematize the meaning of the term *Andean* in novel ways. Burns's *Into the Archive* and Salomon and Niño-Murcia's *The Lettered Mountain* lead us, respectively, through colonial and modern moments of fact creation and fact assembly, providing a nuanced ethnographic picture of how archives are created. Burns's close attention to the practices of Spanish and Creole notaries in colonial Cuzco opens an important window into the often hidden negotiation and manipulation that went into the production of notarial documents in the colonial era, thus suggesting avenues for interpreting the participation of indigenous peoples, although Burns focuses primarily on Spanish practices. Salomon and Niño-Murcia examine how native Andeans in modern Huarochirí record locally relevant events for their own posterity, often in highly stylized and ritualized forms.

The other two volumes—Dueñas's *Indians and Mestizos in the "Lettered City"* and Flores Galindo's *In Search of an Inca*—introduce readers to the production of narratives for political and social activism by native Andeans and their Creole and mestizo interlocutors. Dueñas moves us beyond more frequently studied sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Andean authors such as Guaman Poma de Ayala or El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega into the eighteenth century, when indigenous and mestizo writers affiliated with the church crafted denunciations of colonialism grounded in Christian theology in a way characteristic of their late colonial times.

Finally, in a series of brilliant and still highly relevant essays that for two decades have urgently merited translation into English, Flores Galindo traces utopian dreams of Inca revival that have traversed both temporal and cultural boundaries among diverse actors in Peruvian history. These four works display the infinite possibilities that lie before us for reading the Andean past in new ways.

#### ASSEMBLING THE ARCHIVE

In his classic essay *La ciudad letrada* (1984), Ángel Rama characterized colonial Spanish America as a social constellation built on the primacy of the written word. Its gatekeepers were *letrados*, educated men of letters who not only could read and write but also knew Latin and the legal code; they were, for example, the *licenciados* who staffed the upper levels of the Audiencias. In Rama's scenario, one cannot examine public administration or legal discourses without substantial attention to how particular forms of literacy fostered the emergence and maintenance of colonial bureaucratic and political hierarchies, generating a set of practices to ensure the continuity of their pyramidal structure. This assertion moved literacy studies to the forefront of research on the social formation of Spanish America.

In her gracefully written *Into the Archive*, Kathryn Burns urges historians to take these notions further than Rama did. She notes that, in practice, his lettered city was dependent on the corps of notaries charged with drawing up and validating virtually all legal documents. Notaries were not equal to *letrados*; they occupied an inferior office in the colonial system. Nonetheless, the workings of the lettered city cannot be comprehended without them because the literate-administrative edifice was built of paper, complete with seals, signatures, and rubrics, all of which issued from notarial pens.

Burns's knowledge of notarial practices derives from her keen ethnographic eye, which focuses in marvelous detail on the process of document creation. As she puts it, she is "looking at an archive, not through it" (16). In particular, she guides us through how legal papers were drawn up by notaries—those "with a powerful hand" (*con mano poderosa*)—and their minions, and how the powerless were able to have a say in their legal fate, despite the limitations posed by what appears to be a rigidly stratified system.

*Into the Archive* foregrounds the problem of notarial truth because this is what the notary bestowed on legal documents. Like a ventriloquist, he translated other people's concerns into an "official voice" (2) solidified—made firm—by his *firma* (his signature) and his rubric, which attest to his having witnessed the transaction. Notarial truth did not emerge exclusively from the person of the notary, however, but was generated through negotiation. It was the product of the relationships that notaries established with both their myriad assistants and their clients, who in collusion with notaries successfully asserted their own interests while subverting those of their opponents. Notarial truth emerged, then, out of social relationships among actors of frequently unequal standing, relationships that the notary orchestrated.

One of the most fascinating among the many scenarios that Burns treats at

length is the process of compiling the documents seen in their final form in notarial registries. Notaries many times received what Burns calls “prewriting,” outlines of the conditions that clients wanted in the final document. Notaries also used draft books, in which their assistants logged preliminary versions of the information ultimately put into the official record. We more commonly see only the end result of this process: polished documents in chronological order, all duly validated with the notary’s signature and rubric. But, Burns explains, the process was not seamless and codified. Notaries frequently asked clients to sign blank documents in the numbered pages of their notarial books, so that assistants could later fill in the conditions. Such procedures facilitated the surreptitious manipulation of all sorts of transactions, sometimes with the notary’s collusion. They also explain why notarial books commonly display unusually large or small writing: so that the document would fill the space left available by the presignature.

These tricks stretch our understanding of what constituted notarial truth. What, then, of the people negatively affected by notarial machinations? Burns turns to “exclamations,” records through which individuals voiced protests against other documents they had been made to sign against their will (104–113). For example, if a woman did not have the resources to seek a judicial remedy to a forced donation, a brief notarial “skeleton key”—as Burns calls it—could release her from this obligation (105–106). Exclamations provide a key to understanding how the less powerful, including women and native people, left their mark on the notarial process.

Burns closes *Into the Archive* with a pressing question: “How are we to read an archive so susceptible to manipulation?” (123). Her response is that with archives, as with chessboards, we must comprehend the rules of the game if we are to make sense of their contents. We cannot view archives as simply containing truth; we must simultaneously study how they make truths. In this way, we come to realize that it was perhaps not always in the interest of indigenous clients to speak in their own words when the notary’s voice and ability to manipulate the archive were so effective. Sometimes the dominant voice was the most useful.

This leads me to the second volume under review, Frank Salomon and Mercedes Niño-Murcia’s *The Lettered Mountain*. Coauthored by a historical anthropologist and a sociolinguist, this perceptive ethnography of writing in the small Spanish-speaking indigenous village of Tupicocha examines how Spanish and Peruvian notions of notarial truth were sedimented over Andean forms of literacy such as the khipu. In this indigenous lettered city, alphabetic literacy and European writing conventions predominate but take on distinctive local characteristics. Salomon and Niño-Murcia uncover a truth that, thanks to our penchant for interpreting Andean cultures as oral in nature, has been hidden from the anthropological gaze: Tupicocha is shot through by writing. Its social structure is maintained in part through a distinctly local form of Spanish-language literacy.

Salomon and Niño-Murcia lead us through the multiple facets of the literate life of Tupicochans. We learn how khipu literacy was supplanted by alphabetic writing as tabular formats for recording data were adopted. The tables and spreadsheets introduced to native villagers in the late nineteenth century do not reproduce narrative speech but instead simulate structured action through

chronological sequencing and the construction of categories. That is, spreadsheets embody precisely the same strengths of recording devices such as the khipu. In turn, khipus became not something to be deciphered but ritual adornments to be draped on Tupicochan bodies during important ceremonies.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding the shift from khipu to tables, as in the earlier culture of khipus, modern Tupicochan literacy is part of a broader accounting culture, in which the minutiae of communal life are unremittingly set down on paper, solemnly read aloud in public acts, and ritualistically accounted for by the collectivity in auditing sessions. This is very similar to the ways that literate practice unfolded in tandem with legal ritual in the colonial period, something that can undoubtedly be gleaned from documents studied by Burns.

The Tupicochan literacy highlighted by Salomon and Niño-Murcia marks its practitioners as indigenous in relation to the dominant Peruvian society. Notwithstanding the fact that they write in Spanish, Tupicochan pen pushers are distinctively members of *ayllus* (territorially based Andean social units), with the duty to record the myriad activities of collective life in the village, from communal work parties to clean irrigation canals to festivals foregrounding Andean deities. The production of authoritative writing is thus an act performed in culturally structured scenarios guided by individuals vested with ayllu authority, and accompanied by particular forms of music and drinking. Such literacy also involves a particular lexicon for recording community events, one that reflects both the distance of Tupicochans from the state and their accommodation to national administrative and legal structures. This lexicon has changed over time in response to Tupicocha's changing relationship to the Peruvian state, as *The Lettered Mountain* details in a diachronic study of how Spanish terms have come to replace others in Quechua. However, the differences in grammar and orthography between texts produced in Lima and Tupicocha suggest the latter's uncomfortable subordination to schooled writing.

#### THE MAKING OF NARRATIVES

Although we know a great deal about early colonial Andean authors—Garcilaso, Guaman Poma, and Juan de Santa Cruz Pachacuti Yamqui, among others—those of later colonial times appear in contemporary historiography largely as rebels, as in the cases of Tupac Amaru and Tupac Catari. Alcira Dueñas's insightful *Indians and Mestizos in the "Lettered City"* expands our knowledge of this later period by inviting us to look at a series of Andean theologians and scholars whose strident condemnation of colonial rule preceded and perhaps influenced the wave of indigenous rebellions of late eighteenth century. Dueñas maintains that attention to these later intellectuals reveals the complex networks along which texts circulated, thus complicating our understanding of the lettered city. She also challenges the conventional definition of *Andean* by disputing the inherent dif-

2. The companion volume to *The Lettered Mountain* is instead primarily concerned with khipu literacy in Tupicocha; Frank Salomon, *The Cord Keepers: Khipus and Cultural Life in a Peruvian Village* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004).

ference between indigenous and mestizo writers, and by including both of these groups, and Creoles as well, within the confines of what constitutes Andeans.

The intellectuals whose writings concern Dueñas—including Juan de Cueva Herrera, Don Jerónimo Lorenzo Limaylla, Juan Núñez Vela de Rivera, Don Vicente Morachimo, and Fray Calixto de San José Túpac Inca—were all native Andeans or mestizos, some belonging to the indigenous nobility and others affiliated with the Catholic Church. What characterizes them as a group is the drive to condemn colonial officials such as the *corregidores* (who administered native communities) and instruments such as the *mita* (a levy on native labor), by means of a modernizing discourse that combined support for indigenous education; a sophisticated interpretation of key Christian texts such as the prophet Jeremiah's Lamentations; and an appeal to medieval political theologies of natural right, the common good, and tyranny to sustain their demands. The narratives of these intellectuals were rooted in their colonial condition.

Dueñas portrays these authors as activists, committed to upholding their noble privileges, the restitution of lands to indigenous elites and their mestizo descendants, the admission of native candidates into the priesthood, the corresponding rejection of the status of neophytes ascribed to native people by the church, education in science and letters for Andeans, and the employ of the latter in colonial administration to replace corrupt and abusive Spanish officials. In other words, their writings and politics aimed to effect a far-ranging transformation of the colonial system by strengthening existing native institutions and by inserting Andeans into key positions in the administration of native populations.

These men do not fit our conventional anthropological stereotypes of Andeans. They wore Spanish clothing, appealed with great sophistication to Christian theological tracts, and perceived themselves as indigenous noble subjects of the crown. Dueñas convincingly drives home the complex positioning of these intellectuals who viewed themselves as an elite separate from the mass of indigenous commoners and native women, whom they consistently "othered" in their writings. Moreover, like Guaman Poma, they presented themselves as good Christians, in opposition to Spaniards, whom they characterized as non-Christian and immoral. But unlike their early colonial intellectual forebears, their religiosity sought Andean autonomy within a Christian rather than syncretic framework. They appealed to Inca symbols from within a strongly Christian discourse.

Dueñas demonstrates that the construction of Andean historical narratives shifts abruptly in the late colonial period. These narratives are no longer exclusively indigenous but are shared by mestizos and even Creoles. They promote Andean autonomy but within a colonial system. They are increasingly literate and fervently Christian, drawing on a temporally and geographically diverse archive and generating an astute Andean exegesis of medieval theology. They contribute to the intellectual foundations of the great rebellions of the late eighteenth century.

The rigorous analysis to which Dueñas subjects these narratives builds on and also contributes to the radical reconceptualization of *lo andino* in the past two decades, particularly by anthropologists and historians. A key moment in

this process was the publication, in 1986, of Alberto Flores Galindo's *Buscando un inca*, now skillfully translated into English by Carlos Aguirre, Charles Walker, and Willie Hiatt. When asked to review this translation, I was initially somewhat apprehensive. I hadn't read the original Spanish text in more than two decades. Would it withstand the test of time? Would it be relevant to twenty-first-century readers? Had subsequent scholarship transformed *In Search of an Inca* into a kind of received wisdom, making it less provocative and inspiring? Did we wait too long to translate it into English? The answer to my preoccupations was a resounding no! The new edition of Flores Galindo's masterpiece is as magnificent after almost three decades as the work was when I first read it in Spanish.

As Aguirre and Walker remark in their introduction, part of what makes *In Search of an Inca* so remarkable is its broad sweep, which is attributable to the fact that it is written not in standard academic prose but in the Latin American tradition of the essay. This genre "allowed Flores Galindo the freedom to cover hundreds of years of Peruvian history, combine different methodological traditions . . . , and make ample and creative use of secondary materials" (xxii–xxiii). This genre was also suited to an author who hoped that his work not only would have a scholarly impact but would also create a political effect in the broader reading public.

For Flores Galindo, utopia is not an impossible dream but a practical objective. The brilliant first chapter, titled "Europe and the Land of the Incas," traces the broad outlines of this argument, calling the Andean utopia "a collective creation" by the vanquished to generate a new worldview using terms forced upon them by the victors but imbued with new content, so as to understand the past, alter the present, and perceive the future (46–48). The utopias traced in the various essays of *In Search of an Inca* were constructed by numerous authors, both anonymous and named. First is the sixteenth-century Taqui Ongoy movement to restore native sacred space, followed by that of the rebellions that created turmoil in both the highlands and the lowlands in the eighteenth century. Flores Galindo then considers politicians and activists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including José Carlos Mariátegui and Victor Raúl Haya de la Torre. The utopias examined are contained in writings such as Inca Garcilaso's *Comentarios reales* but are also realized in practical action such as leftist politics in the twentieth century.

This is not your standard ethnography of utopian ideas. Flores Galindo moves with ease from the colonial to the republican and the modern eras. He fluidly shifts among constituencies and types of political projects, ranging from native peoples in the sixteenth-century Taqui Ongoy to nineteenth-century social planners and modern-day intellectuals, and from the printed word to direct action. In effect, he shows how utopias morph over time as they move across populations, and he demonstrates how the fluid movement of the written word into political practice generates new narratives. He expands the notion of *lo andino* to encompass myriad utopias in Peru. The result is a kind of a road map for future research, a series of proposals of interest to scholars in a broad range of disciplines and working on a wide swath of topics. Perhaps, *In Search of an Inca* is still relevant

because scholars continue to operate in discrete disciplinary cubbyholes. Reading it might jolt us out of the metanarratives of anthropology, art history, history, literature, or political science to consider more wide-ranging propositions. We might also guess that *In Search of an Inca* has left its mark on all of the other works reviewed in this essay.