

## INTRODUCTION



### Peru and the Ethnography of Writing

Almost half a millennium has passed since Spanish invaders began building an empire of letters over the lands of the Inka state. As much as Spanish law strove to keep writing harnessed as the specialized language of command for legal and religious conquistador elites, the people called *yndios* quickly became actors in the transatlantic web of alphabetic writing. This study tells the neglected story of how they made the alphabet their own, and goes on to analyze rural Andean writing practices of our times.

The fact of Andean literacy, which so many have contrived to overlook, centrally affects whom we take Andean Americans to be. Historically, peoples who spoke Quechua and Aymara (like other Native South Americans) have long been described as eternal outsiders to the world of letters. Indeed some authors have stereotyped them as “oral” cultures, and assigned to them a role as tragic Rousseauian resisters against alphabetic regimentation. But this is mistaken. The more one reads in the lesser-known archives of the countryside, the more one realizes that much of what we know as Andean culture has grown in and through literacy. If this damages the appeal of the Andean as a “non-Western” culture, so much the better. It brings us toward a more realistic encounter with the peoples of highland South America, in all their cultural distinctiveness, as actors within the creation of modernity.

## READING BEHIND ADOBE WALLS

Today, campesino households in high-altitude villages cherish their goatskin-wrapped packets of titles and lawsuits (see figure 1) as vital endowments. They and their ancestors have for centuries known legal writing as a battlefield for livelihood. Historical accounts of Peruvians and other Andean peoples abound in cases of bloodshed over bad paperwork.

But were campesinos themselves writers, or only clients of writers? Did they evolve distinctive ways of writing? What role has script played in their self-government? What role in self-representation, expressive lore, and the sharing of historic memory? Does script have a role in the practices classed as Andean, such as devotion to deified mountains? In short, are Andean local societies in any deep and comprehensive sense literate societies?

Peasants everywhere are routinely treated as marginal members of the world of letters. They are not widely considered even as consumers of the written word, much less as producers. Discussions of rural inequality routinely treat high levels of “illiteracy” almost as if they inhered in the peasant condition.

This is an outsider’s view, and an illusory one. Ethnography and sociolinguistics provide a very different image. In this book we explore how one peasant village has made the alphabet its own and developed an internal graphic community. Formerly speaking an Aymara-related ethnic tongue as well as Quechua, it is today a monolingually Spanish-speaking community. The fact that its people are native speakers of Spanish hugely invigorates their participation in writing; this would have been quite a different book had it concentrated on one of the decreasing number of Peruvian villages where Spanish is only known as a *lingua franca*.

But the village we studied is at the same time strikingly Andean in its social organization, mythology, and expressive culture. We are concerned here with the distinctive characteristics of writing that arise in the vernacular-literate process of living out this culture. They include original developments of codification and norms, rules of performativity, lexical change, diglossia between spoken and written language, framing of writing within Andean ritual scenarios, and a characteristic folk theory of writing. Changes over time in these facets of vernacular literacy reflect the face-to-face dynamics of a small community as much as they do interaction with greater powers. To read behind adobe walls, in the archives



1. Campesino households protect their titles and other papers in goatskin packets. (Photos by the authors unless otherwise indicated.)

of an Andean village, is to encounter different processes from the ones registered in studies of metropolitan systems. They have implications for the way we imagine writing as a discourse of power.

This study is the work of an ethnographer and a sociolinguist of literacy who have shared fieldwork in one small Peruvian village: Tupicocha (province of Huarochirí, department of Lima). It proposes that exploring the outermost and least-studied reaches of the worldwide alphabetic order will expand and vary our notions of literacy. For the internal writings of this village, the main corpus of this study, attest to an old and largely self-generated conquest of the alphabet. It preceded and still stands apart from the work of state schools, which continue to project the ideology of “alphabetization” in indifference to the heritage of rural writings. Local writings are amazingly profuse and detailed. If many of them also seem crabbed, obscure, formulaic, or formally defective to the metropolitan eye, that only means we have not understood how they are made or what they are good for: a system in which the accumulation of writing is felt to create that virtual thing, “community.” Writing is felt to give community a body and a physical presence immune to the flaws and dangers of daily interaction.

More formally Tupicocha, like any sphere of information exchange, can also be characterized as a *graphic network* or *graphic community*, by analogy to speech community. Like the idea of speech community, the concept of graphic community can be scaled up or down to adjust to the scope of a code's application. Scripts as well as tongues vary from broad lingua franca usage to the highly specific vernacular whose peculiarities mark local or other group boundaries. The oral counterpart of village literate practice is a form of the dialect called Andean Spanish by Rodolfo Cerrón-Palomino (2003) and Ana María Escobar (1990). But, as we will show, rural writing is very far from being a transcript of the spoken vernacular. Most village writing is register specific, requiring a mode of discourse derived from legal genres even when the content is Andean-ritual or folk-legal rather than official. Document writing is omnipresent in daily life, more so than in metropolitan life, yet it marks an exaggerated contrast with everyday speech. We consider this dichotomy a form of diglossia between writable and conversational Andean Spanish. Indeed villagers see writing as a separate semiotic sphere. It can be rendered into speech, but its social force is independent of speech, and this is its virtue.

That is how villagers see it. As observers, however, we are concerned with how Tupicochans produce text out of talking events, no less than with internal properties of their texts. From the sociolinguist's viewpoint, the oral and the written products of the village do address each other and do change each other. Despite themselves, village writers produce writing influenced by varying oral sociolinguistic contexts, and we are attentive to the ways in which written lexicon and format respond to them. The corpus illustrates how vernacular literacy in Tupicocha has continually been remodeled according to the practices of the institutions whose social life it has recorded. It is in the whole field of discourse, not in writing alone, that the written text—its meanings and functions—are co-constructed. Shared meanings of terms and forms are continually negotiated and renegotiated (Mannheim and Tedlock 1995:3). Innovations in community accordingly leave traces in ways of writing as well as in overt written content.

Attentive to this interaction, we complement the reading of Tupicochan writings from the past with observation of “writing events” (Heath 1982:93)—which are also talking events—and with ethnographic study of the forces that shape content. We are concerned with literacy as a social

practice, a play of meaningful signs emerging in social interaction and dialogical exchanges (Roberts and Street 1997:168).

#### ORIGINS OF MODERN ANDEAN GRAPHIC CULTURE

Indigenous Andean engagement with the Roman alphabet has for the most part a hidden history. We do not know who was the first native of Inka lands to take up the quill. The army of Francisco Pizarro invaded Peru in 1532; already in 1535, when Spaniards were still ransacking the sacred Inka capital of Cuzco, Fray Vicente Valverde was appointed its bishop and founded a school for Andean lords. Only five years later crown policy mandated (but did not actually create) schools for “Indian” nobles in all major provincial towns (Andrien 2001:116). Informal literacy may have spread early among the translators who helped produce catechisms, or among the Inka nobles who had become enmeshed by marriage with the Pizzarran invaders within a decade of the invasion. By 1560 an influential dictionary and grammar of “general” Quechua was in print (Santo Tomás 1951 [1560], 1995 [1560]). In 1570 Peru’s first Jesuit mission was set up in Huarochirí, the main scene of this book, and it promoted elite literacy for native nobles. In 1576 King Philip II gave the Jesuits general responsibility for teaching Andean elites, and in 1578 he provided funding for the venture.

Jesuit efforts to rework Quechua as a missionary tongue for the Christianization of Andean peoples (Wood 1986:15–29) were, among other things, a practical solution for catechizing peoples whose non-Inka ethnic languages were so diverse as to defy the church’s linguistic resources. Huarochiranos were a case in point, being speakers of an ethnic language related to Aymara (Adelaar 1994). The viceregal university, San Marcos, installed Quechua as a required course for future clergy, while rivals in the cathedral chapter established another Quechua professorate (Durston 2007a:55).

As a part of its campaign to create a standardized process of conversion, the Archbishopric’s highest councils published bilingual and trilingual (Spanish, Quechua, and Aymara) sermonaries, catechisms, and devotional songs. Demand for Quechua training of the clergy fueled some superb lexicography, from 1583 through the 1610s (most importantly, González Holguín 1952 [1608]; 1984 [1612]). Prescriptive and doctrinal in intent, it nonetheless compiled a great descriptive store of information

about Quechua lexicon and rhetoric. Clergymen put great effort into choosing Quechua glosses for Christian terms, and also deciding which should not be translated lest pagan semantic traces foster heresy. Literacy in “pastoral Quechua” (as Alan Durston calls it in his commanding monograph; 2007a) did produce some splendid works, such as the devotional poetry of Juan Pérez Bocanegra (1631) and Luis Jerónimo de Oré (1992 [1598]). But it was meant to be, and remained, a channel of indoctrination—almost an Orwellian Newspeak. It may never even have been a spoken language in the sense that any speech community freely produced it. Rather, pastoral Quechua seems to have been a “high” sociolect reserved for specifically Catholic roles and contexts. (A sociolect means a variety of a given language used in one part of society, such as a class, ethnic group, age group, or religious community.) Writers of Tupían and Arawakan languages on the Jesuit mission frontier in what is now Paraguay and eastern Bolivia found contrasting sociolinguistic niches; see Clara López Beltrán (2005).

Church documents and books form the overwhelming majority of colonial Quechua writings. Written Quechua did, nonetheless, develop a presence in the “civil” literate orbit. During the first century of Spanish rule, some local “Indian” nobles learned to write Quechua the way clerics did, and at times used it in their political correspondence (Itier 1991). During the first colonial century, Spanish courts recognized papers brought forward by bilingual *escribanos de naturales* (‘scribes for natives’; Burns 2007n62). Although no whole protocol book of such a writer has yet come to light, Burns’s *Into the Archive* (2010) identifies one such scribe and studies newly unearthed work from his office. Durston’s compilation of twelve known cases of “mundane” Quechua for private or administrative-legal purposes (2008; see also Durston 2003) indicates Quechua adaptation of scribal conventions. At least one series, from near Cuzco (1605–8), seems to be notarial. The *cabildos* (‘village councils’) established as part of the Toledan “reduction” government were supposed to keep alphabetic records as well as *quipus* (knotted-cord records, the pre-Hispanic medium), the former concerning testaments and criminal proceedings (Burns 2004). By 1616 Lima’s famous Indian school in El Cercado had opened. (El Cercado was a reserved district wherein the colonial City of the Kings tried to corral its native and African labor pool.) Similar institutions existed in other cities (Cárdenas Ayaipoma 1977; Olachea Labayen 1958). Toward 1615 the bicultural chronicler Felipe

Guaman Poma de Ayala drew a *regidor* ('village councilman') holding both a book and a khipu, and a "scribe of the [village] council" (1980 [1615]:759) in indigenous headgear working with paper only (see figures 2–3).

Nonetheless Peru, unlike Mesoamerica with its immense accumulations of native-language papers, never saw indigenous languages stably inserted into the civil part of the alphabetic graphic community (Restall 1997, 1999; Sousa and Terraciano 2003; Terraciano and Restall 1992). One reason Quechua literacy did not become massive or habitual among native Peruvians may be that the clergy decided not to promote the "general language" or lingua franca variety of Quechua, which was already known among many ethnic groups before the 1532 Spanish invasion. Instead they published and promoted a southern dialect which they considered nobler because they associated it with the Inka royal city of Cuzco. Supposedly faithful to the high diction of nobles, and therefore more worthy of sacred usage, it became the dialectal base of church Quechua.

Rather, Spanish became the general language for writing long before the Huarochiranos made it their spoken vernacular. In the civil sphere, by the early seventeenth century the imperial state, increasingly saturating the countryside, exerted its power chiefly through translators and non-indigenous rural scribes who wrote Spanish only. In 1596 the Council of the Indies asked the king to forbid official paperwork in Andean tongues. Although no broad decree to this effect followed, state officials became ever less receptive to Quechua (Mannheim 1992:90). By the late sixteenth century officials perceived the onslaught of "Indian" lawsuits as a problem which bilingual administration might only increase. As the governmental fortunes of Quechua declined, the insertion of Spanish-language writing into Andean society deepened apace. Spanish literacy was not universal or demotic in colonial times (1532–1825 for Peru), but it was omnipresent and immensely productive. Archives on both sides of the Atlantic are crammed with the papers Andean rural people tendered via the testimony-translation-transcription chain (see Lienhard 1992:153–307 for a sampling).

Some *curacas* (a hispano-Quechua term for Andean nobles, derived from *kuraka*) were avid readers of Spanish, and writers as well, to a degree that disturbed Spanish onlookers. Monique Alaperrine-Bouyer (2002:155–57) cites a 1588 memorandum by a Cuzco cleric, Bartolomé Alvarez, which complains against one kuraka who bought a *monterroso*,



2. Toward 1615, Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala drew a village councilman holding both a book and a khipu (1980 [1615]: 746).



3. Guaman Poma also drew a "scribe of the [village] council" (1980 [1615]: 759) working with paper only.

or specialized lawbook for scribes. In the 1620s one kuraka's estate included a collection of drama, history, law, and theology that would have looked handsome in the home of a Castilian notable (Hampe Martínez 1989). Alcira Dueñas's *Indians and Mestizos in the "Lettered City"* (2010) brings to light important writings by seven kurakas who, during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, addressed their claims to upper levels of the Spanish empire. They were not men of the Hispanicized Inka elite that adorned Cuzco, but politically and sometimes intellectually ambitious champions of eroding ethnic aristocracies over most of the former Inka state: from Lambayeque in Peru's far north to Chuquisaca (now Sucre) in the south of Bolivia. Their papers show that command of prestigious genres such as memoranda to the king was not rare among native elites. Such men may have played a role in the diffusion of literacy through rural Quechua-speaking society.

Meanwhile, literally every one of the plebeian "people called Indians" (Anonymous: 1991:41) underwent, with death-and-taxes regularity, the experience of having his or her tributary status written into state inspections and ledgers (Salomon and Guevara Gil 1994). It was the endless contestation of routine plebeian complaints, noble's requests for revisits or succession rulings, and endemic litigation over lands and tributes which would form rural Peruvians' ideas of genre and prose style. By the later seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth, some kurakas and Andean commoners close to the scribal establishment could emulate the ponderous legalistic prose that spoke to power. Baltazar Jaime Martínez Compañón, an archbishop on Peru's north coast and the author of a remarkable illustrated book on the region's biota and cultures, designed a general system of schooling for Andean pupils in the middle eighteenth century (Ramírez 2008). Official schooling as such, however, penetrated only the aristocratic level of society. Pablo Macera (cited in Klaren 2000:105) estimates the number of pupils in formal primary schools toward the end of the eighteenth century at only 5,000 for "yndios" and others. The actual diffusion of writing to plebeian society took place outside schoolhouse walls.

The intervention of public rural schooling, with its ideology of universal literacy, thus marks a relatively recent impact on a very old literate order. In most places rural education was only implemented from the 1920s on. (It had been legislated but not funded fifty years earlier: Fell 1990; Mac-Lean y Estenós 1944; Macera 1990). Higher-lying and more

remote villages first received public schooling as late as the 1960s, when the first presidency of Fernando Belaúnde Terry promoted “alphabetization” as an economic development strategy. Rural Andean villages were and to some degree still are perceived in cities as a linguistically and racially stigmatized margin of the transatlantic community of the Roman alphabet. Yet as the independent Republic of Peru took shape after 1825, villagers had already thoroughly internalized the graphic order despite having no schools of their own.

These growing edges of literacy, sponsored by church and by state, were not expanding into a graphic void. For when Spaniards brought the alphabet, they brought it to a society which already had its own advanced resources for recording information. The ancient medium of the *kipu*, or knot-cord record, was thriving and continued to thrive during at least the first colonial century. The relation between Andean traditions of the legible and “writing proper” was therefore not one of simple replacement, but one of durable coexistence. The widespread view of writing as a cognitive revolution, a cultural thunderbolt piercing previously “oral” societies, reflects the ideology of educators and not the historic evidence.

How decisive, then, was alphabetic interaction? Taking into account the interface between *kipu* and paper, should we think of script production as taking place in a distinctive indigenous domain affected by distinctive Andean ideas and practices of literacy? Were Andean literacy practices articulated with nonalphabetic inscriptive techniques in a distinctive hybrid semiosis? Is there any prospect of understanding the intertextual relation between deeply different literacies, as Serge Gruzinski (1993) has accomplished in Mexico?

In sum, to understand the roots of Andean graphic practice we need to imagine Andean literacy in two ways. On one hand, the importation of the alphabet, a code molded to sonic units of language, created an alternative to the *kipu* code molded on the categorical units of action (Salomon 2004a). Although colonial authority made use of *kipus*, Spaniards never learned the corded graphic order enough to prescribe its details. It was a process largely internal to the “republic of Indians” which shaped the graphic pluralism reflected in late *kipu* use (Salomon 2007). Some scholars think the colonial development of *kipus* included elite attempts to retool cords as a syllabary, that is, as a writing on phonographic principles (Hyland 2003:136).

On the other hand, the growth of Andean graphic habits also connected the Andean peoples quite early with a global textual community. The image of so-called “yndios” as illiterate latecomers to the bookish world is an oversimplification. As soon as Spain and the papacy sought to reduce them to a regulated peasantry, it also unintentionally made them privy to the scripts and protocols of regulation. In their own way, colonial native nobles knew very well what Michel Foucault meant when he spoke of documents “producing or objectifying the subjects that use them” (Read 2006:158). Although “yndios” responded from positions of disadvantage, often through mediators, they did respond in kind. Amerindian peoples thus joined the empire of letters, and some learned to write almost as early as mass literacy was emerging in Europe itself.

It is by no means obvious why these processes remain almost invisible in the historiography of literacy. The habit of describing rural Andean people as “natives,” a term which unreflectively invokes nonliteracy, has blinded us to the fact that the institutions we think of as Andean were built through active engagement in literate media.

#### **NEW LITERACY STUDIES AND THEIR SEQUELS IN AND BEYOND THE AMERICAS**

The case study we will present fits into a wide literature of cross-cultural approaches, which can be overviewed from the general to the particular. First, it benefits from works on theories and practices of literacy as such, including anthropological classics (Basso 1974; Goody 1986; Heath 1983; Street 1984) and sociolinguistic work on theories of context and language socialization (Gee 1986, 2000; Gumperz 1982; Schieffelin and Ochs 1986). Among ethnographies, Brinkley Messick’s *The Calligraphic State* (1993), a historical study of oral and written practices within highland Yemeni Shari’a polities, provides a uniquely full and deep analysis of writing as “discursive formation” along Foucauldian lines. Many of the most influential ethnographies of writing contemplate an “oral/literate continuum” (Biber 1988; Chafe and Tannen 1987; Finnegan 1988), an idea also entertained here. We also take some note of wider debates in grammatology and semiology (Connerton 1989; N. Goodman 1976; Harris 1995; Lafont et al. 1984; Sampson 1985).

A related branch of comparative and theoretical discussion concerns the nature of documents as cultural forms (Foucault 1989:129). As for the definition of documentation, we follow Buckland (1997:215) in adopting

Suzanne Briet's precise but capacious four-part definition: a document is a material object, intended to be used as evidence, processed so as to serve this purpose, and recognized as serving it. We sympathize with Annelise Riles's call for ethnographers to get beyond Foucauldian harping on the hegemony of document technology, which "tends itself to become fairly hegemonic," and ask "how else documents may be 'good to think with' as for scholars as much as for their subjects" (2006:13).

Second, this Peruvian case enters into an already large field of empirical studies about the "effects of literacy." This literature began as debate around sweeping assertions by Jack Goody and Ian Watt (1962). It continued with a barrage of "New Literacy Studies" (or NLS; Besnier 1988, Roberts and Street 1997) rebutting Goody and Watt on ethnological grounds. In anthropology and sociolinguistics, the "NLS debate" began with what is called the "great divide" controversy (Goody and Watt 1962; Olson 1994; Ong 1982). Extending "Toronto school" theses rooted in Greco-Roman studies toward non-Western cases, Goody and Watt argued that the perceived "great divide" between the cognitive modes of simple and complex societies or primitive and modern ones arises, at bottom, from the difference between handling information as speech (intersubjective, transient) and as script (objectlike, durable). By giving discourse a physical presence independent of the conversations that produce it, writing radically alters its possibilities. While in oral interaction meaning can largely be derived from context, writing is decoded out of context and needs therefore to be more explicit. Transformed to an object out of context, discourse becomes susceptible to distancing and critique in a way that conversation rarely fosters. Writing is therefore associated with logic and critical cognitive habits. These include the fundamentals of historicist and analytical mentalities.

"New Literacy Studies" (NLS) arose in the 1980s as an interdisciplinary challenge to this "great divide" argument. (Goody himself, as his valuable comparativist researches advanced, had by then adopted more nuanced positions.) New Literary Studies writers approach literacy as a symbolic system rooted in social practices (Barton and Hamilton 1998; Gee 1986, 2000; Heath 1982; Scollon and Scollon 1981; Street 1984, 1993; among others). The NLS theoretical framework does not affirm any "effect of literacy" as such, but instead postulates that the effects of literacy inhere in the nature of the social relations articulated through it. In a crucial moment Sylvia Scribner and Michael Cole (1981) studied the triply lit-

erate Vai-speaking population of Liberia and concluded that neither literacy in English (acquired in school), nor in Vai (an indigenous system of syllabic writing), nor in Arabic (associated with the reading of the Koran) demonstrated a direct relation with abstract cognitive performance. Rather, each graphic practice heightened the kind of cognition its social context demanded, such as memorization for Quranic learners of Arabic or lyric prosody for Hanunoo (Phillippine) learners of an Indic syllabary (Frake 1983:371). Scholars of NLS see literacy as inherently socially situated, and necessarily plural even within a single graphic code insofar as the practices it articulates are multiple.

New Literary Studies monographs have strongly influenced methodology for studying writing (e.g., Barton and Hamilton 1998; Baynham 1995). Several edited volumes provided worldwide samplings of vernacular literacy research (Barton, Hamilton, and Ivanič 2000; Boyarin 1993; Dubin and Kuhlman 1992; Hamilton, Barton, and Ivanič 2000; Street 1993). Perspectives of NLS proved important not only because they distanced ethnography from the suppositions of the “great divide,” but also because they gave an empirical idea of the range of diversity in lettered practice.

Having moved the term *literacy* to its plural, a recent current in NLS now attempts to find empirical regularities that might reunite literacy studies on a new common ground. James Collins and Richard Blot (2003) point out that the NLS paradigm has fostered a relativist vision within which the study of “writing” as a unitary topic tends to dissolve. As an alternative they propose looking for consistent tendencies within the diversity of literacy events. Like Claude Lévi-Strauss in the famous “writing lesson” chapter of *Tristes Tropiques* (1992 [1955]:294–304), they find such an avenue in the sociological and power-freighted aspects of writing rather than in purported cognitive implications. Their discussion takes up currents from an earlier, mostly French, round of theorizing on texts, education, discourse, and power (Bourdieu 1991; Derrida 1972; Foucault 1989). Sociolinguistics too has evolved a nomothetic common ground. But we sympathize with Messick’s judgment that despite “family resemblances found in other places and times, a discursive history . . . must always be resolutely specific” (1993:254).

Moving from the vast field of general literacy studies to a domain of closer comparability, the Peruvian case might be considered in a third body of cases: those belonging to imperial “edges” where indigenous-language communities come under the literate hegemony of royal or colo-

nial languages, and graphic practice therefore acquires a context of unequal pluralism. This includes Mesoamerica (Kowalewski and Saindon 1992; Restall 1999; Van Acker 1995; Vaughan 1990), the Philippines (Rafael 1988), Africa (Bledsoe and Robey 1993; Blommaert 2004; Janzen 1985; MacGaffey 1986; Maxwell 1983; Prinsloo and Breier 1996; Twaddle 1974), Amazonia (Aikman 1999; Gow 1990; Perrin 1986; Vidal 1992), the West Indies (Roberts 1997), Oceania (Besnier 1995; Bloch 1993; Gewertz and Errington 1991), Asia (Ahearn 2001), the Guarani-speaking lowlands (Meliá 1998), and the Andes themselves (Adelaar 1997; Dedenbach 1997; Itier 1995; Jouve Martín 2005; Mannheim 1991; Rappaport 1994). A subset of this literature concerns the reception, or sometimes the nonrecognition, of Amerindian forms of inscription by those who introduced the alphabet. Germaine Warkentin's influential essay (1999) on Algonkian "hieroglyphs" and wampum, like Elizabeth Boone's introduction to *Writing without Words* (1998:3–26), argues that such problems are concrete instances of basic dissensus on what writing is. Richard Rubinger (2007) provides a deep study about the plebeian appropriation of Japanese script from the sixteenth century onward. It too is a study of "edges," but in this case of social classes marginal to elite literacy, rather than outlying lands.

Jan Blommaert's *Grassroots Literacy: Writing, Identity and Voice in Central Africa* (2008) stands out as a particularly close counterpart to our work. Through study of vernacular texts from the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Blommaert measures the gulf separating "homemade" arts of writing from elite norms and demonstrates how the former are discounted. Other researches in rural Africa also reveal the riches of provincial writing that result when, as Philippe Lavigne-Delville puts it (2002), "farmers use 'pieces of paper' to defend resources in Francophone Africa." Ever more "reservoirs" of vernacular literacy are coming to light in many countries at the periphery of the older "republic of letters."

Contemporary studies about literacy in Latin America emphasize the swarming variety of literacies and demonstrate that these practices are likewise situated in vernacular social webs, not just in literate institutions. Studies about the endogenous spread and teaching of writing tend to contrast European "fetishism of writing" (in Lienhard's words) with plebeian appropriations of it as a means of self-defense (Rappaport 1994). Brooke Larson remarks of Bolivia after 1860 that "as some peasant leaders entered the Hispanic world of 'print capitalism,' they or their scribes mastered literacy in order to make their collective views known to Creole

politicians” (2004:53–54). However, this contrast no longer satisfies as a full description. Ethnographic approaches demonstrate that writing also has a long history as an internal structure of nonelite societies. Students of locally placed literacy include Judy Kalman (1999), who analyzed the writing practices of a group of scribes practicing their trade in a public plaza in Mexico City, and later those of a group of women in the neighborhood of Mixquic at the edge of the city (Kalman 2005). Some of these studies have ethnohistoric depth. Among the most surprising studies is Clara López Beltrán’s and Akira Saito’s fascinating ethnographic volume (2005) on Mojos, in eastern lowland Bolivia. It concentrates on vernacular innovations evolving from sacred literacy after the Jesuit missions were expelled in 1767. Jorge Pavez’s compilation *Cartas mapuche* (2008) illuminates how Chilean and Argentinian indigenous groups put secretaries and even newspapers to work diffusing the political correspondence of their still-unconquered war leaders in the mid- to late nineteenth century.

While Latin America comes late to the NLS arena, it has a distinguished record in humanistic studies of literacy. Probably no single work has affected humanists’ understanding of New World literacy more than Angel Rama’s remarkable *La ciudad letrada* (1984; translated as *The Lettered City* 1996). In reviewing the English translation, Eric Metcalf (1997) distills Rama’s emphasis on writing in Latin America as a profession which stamped its products with a peculiar diction:

Inextricably woven into the urban system [of the viceroyalties] was a culture of writing that would administer the city and extend its influence over the rural areas beyond its walls. The interpretation and implementation of a steady flow of imperial and ecclesiastic directives required a vast lettered elite Rama described as the “letrados.” This class of educated men documented legal decisions, drafted governmental edicts, maintained church records and authored the literature of Latin America for three hundred years. The letrados were tightly condensed within the confines of the city. A diverse bureaucratic corps, they mingled exclusively among their peers and served their urban institutions in an increasingly successful effort to duplicate the hierarchical divisions of power in the uncivilized territories. Irrespective of their particular offices, these minor functionaries were linked by a common skill: literacy.

From their ranks would arise the intellectuals, the poets and the writers of Latin America, as well as a characteristic Baroque style drawn from their Spanish superiors. Trained and practiced in the art of writing, the *letrados* employed a formal speech divorced from the rural vulgarities of the subservient illiterate.

The scribal register of language was more than just “divorced from the rural vulgarities.” It was propagated, according to Rama, as an earthly vehicle of divine authority. Human order was felt to emanate seamlessly down from transcribed divine utterance (in scripture) to the detailed conduct of everyday life through the mediation of royal and other authoritative writ. In the ideology of the lettered city, writing did not simply reflect social order *ex post facto*; order was *created* in the act of writing. Script was taken to be the originating, determining form of human discourse, and speech its defective by-product. This premise—in polar contrast to the speech-centered Quranic ethos Messick studied—still holds firm in much of rural Latin America, including Tupicocha.

Our stance toward Rama might be characterized as loyal opposition. His persuasive view of the colonial “lettered city” provides a compelling image of the world of scribal letters. Yet it lacks a full insertion into the America it sets out to explain. The scribal and notarial power structure he describes did not grow in a vacuum. The societies it enmeshed in the most populous parts of America, Mexico, and the Andes, had already possessed complex webs of graphic practices. Whatever else the effects of literacy may have been in the vicerealties of Peru and New Spain, they were surely interaction effects. As Serge Gruzinski argued in *La conquête de l’imaginaire* (published in English as *The Conquest of Mexico* [1993]), these interactions were not just content-neutral changes of medium. By concurrently using Mexican glyphs and alphabetic writing, Mexicans internalized such entities of the European imaginary as saints, kings, and revelations. It was in the process of revising Mexican writing so as to contain these cultural entities that Mexican thinking became imbued with Iberian categories. In this way Mexicans became capable of acting as Americans within Christendom: became “*yndios*.” The process of absorbing icons from Spain went along with the incorporation of alphabetic writing, and with it, of a thoroughly changed mentality concerning the relation between visual and verbal knowledge. The analogous changes in the Andes are harder to trace because Andean graphic media were even

more dissimilar from alphabetic media than Mesoamerican ones were (Cummins 1998). But we will treat the nature of interaction between khipus and alphabetic representation in Tupicocha as far as the state of khipu studies allows.

A fourth literature—namely, reports on writing and reading among contemporary Andean people—is springing up copiously around local NGOs. With the help of NGOs, Rainer Hostnig, Ciro Palomino Dongo, and Jean-Jacques Decoster (2007) have published a vast corpus of primary sources from village archives in Apurímac Department. Projects for bilingual education are especially prolific (e.g., Cotacachi 1994; Godenzzi 1992; Jung and López 1988; Zúñiga 1990). A Bolivian monograph by Denise Arnold and Juan de Dios Yapita (2000), like Gruzinski's, argues that the infiltration of literacy into a local graphic order alters the fundamentals of culture. The work of Nancy Hornberger (2000), an ethnographer-educator and Andean specialist, constitutes the main bridge between school studies and inquiries into out-of-school literacy such as Sarah Lund's (1997). Peruvian inquiries into the "ethnography of schooling" concentrate on the diffusion of alphabetic writing in rural regions and in indigenous communities (Ames 2002; Ansión 1989; Montero 1990).

An interesting Andean vein of discussion concerns the dark side of literacy. To Walter Mignolo (1995:29–124), throughout the New World literacy is inseparable from "the colonization of languages" and the suffocation of native knowledge. Some peasant voices also speak of the high cost of letters. A radiant "myth of progress" centered on schooling (Degregori 1986, 1991) promises modern enrichment, but has as its obverse the blackly grotesque "school myth" about cannibal demons who beguile with an offer of learning (Ortiz Rescaniere 1973:143–49). In a fascinating study of letters written between highland villagers and their peers who have emigrated to jungle frontier zones, Lund (1997) observes that letters arrive in the home community carrying greater significance than what is overtly written, because letters may carry an invisible freight of magic. Peter Wogan's Ecuadorian ethnography *Magical Writing in Salasaca* (2004) reports on a belief that one can kill people by writing their names in a book—a suggestion of Rama's idea as seen in the mirror of local conflict. We view negativity about writing as a corollary of involvement with it, rather than resistance to it.

Studies from the Peruvian Amazon demonstrate enormous divergences in perceptions of literacy. Sheyla Aikman (1999, 2004) and Peter

Gow (1990, 1991) both studied communities which became acquainted with the alphabet within living memory. Amazonian communities studied by Aikman perceive bilingual literacy acquisition as an innovation, but Gow reports that the Piro say they “already had writing” when teachers arrived because shamanic traditionalists view letters as part of the same class of legible signs as the patterns manifested in *yona* (hallucination-inspired painted patterns). The notion that Amerindian peoples “already” had writing has been documented from a number of societies (Hugh-Jones 1989:65–68; Perrin 1986; Platt 1992:143), which too raises questions about the cultural basis of lettered authority in Amerindia.

A final focus of Peruvian discussion, closely relevant to the present study, concerns degrees of endogenous versus outside-imposed literacy. In the fullest ethnography of literacy in the Andean highlands to date, *(Des)encuentros con la escritura: Escuela y comunidad en los Andes peruanos* (2002a), Virginia Zavala sees writing in Umaca (Andahuaylas) as an imposition rooted in the interests of the state and Evangelical church sectors but conveying little or no endogenous information. Linda King (1994) reports similar findings from Mexico. Others, however, see in village literacy a much stronger component of local genesis (Niño-Murcia 2004, 2009). A recent volume compiled by Zavala, Mercedes Niño-Murcia, and Patricia Ames—*Escritura y sociedad* (2004)—presents six works dedicated to the study of literacy in Peru, which show wide variation in degrees of endogeny. Three of these study Andean communities (Salomon, De la Piedra, Niño-Murcia), two concern Amazonian groups (Ames, Aikman), while one (Zavala) scrutinizes the state’s National Program for Literacy.

#### LOCALE OF THE STUDY

The scene of this study is Huarochirí Province in the central Peruvian department of Lima. The department of Lima is a swath of the western or Pacific face of the Andean Cordillera. Its lands slope from the ice-crusting crowns of the mountains down to the desert beaches of the Pacific. Huarochirí Province forms a middle section of this large department (see map 1). Its lands consist of small watersheds that gather where glaciers meet high tundra 4,000 to 5,000 meters (13,123 to 16,404 feet) above sea level. Its rivers plunge through narrow canyons, and end in oasis-like valleys from an elevation of about 1,000 meters (3,280 feet) downward to the Pacific beaches and fishing coves. The capital of the province is a small city also called Huarochirí, located high on the headwaters of the Mala



specialty. Sales of cheese and flowers also supplement a strained subsistence. Agriculture is a never-ending struggle to improve canals and reservoirs that capture the snow and melt off of the heights, as well as channeling scarce rain. The religious rites mediated through writing are usually efforts to cope with water scarcity.

But Huarochirí is not a remote or self-sufficient area. Even more than most rural Peruvians, Huarochiranos live in the shadow of a metropolis: the “Goliath’s head” city of Lima, whose metropolitan population approached 9 million in 2010. Lima and Huarochirí coexist so closely that one of Lima’s self-built peripheral boroughs (Lurigancho) now overlaps Huarochirí territory.

Villages such as Tupicocha appear intensely Andean in their agropastoral way of life, especially in their high reaches. But the people one finds herding alpacas under the glittering snow of Paria Caca Mountain almost always have close kin living as immigrants in the concrete labyrinth of central Lima. Many if not most Huarochirí highlanders travel there frequently to trade or to work for wages. Most families send as many children as they can to be educated in Lima, often by dint of great sacrifice. Many have relatives in farther diaspora. Huarochirí colonies thrive in Texas, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, and California, not to mention Milan and Madrid.

Huarochiranos form only a tiny fraction of the nation. As of 2007 the Peruvian census counted 74,735 inhabitants of Huarochirí. One might expect the children of this province to disappear into the colossal maelstrom of Lima; 28.7 percent of the country’s citizens by 1996 lived in Lima,<sup>1</sup> while projections from the 2007 census indicate that Huarochiranos make up only about two- to three-tenths of 1 percent of their country. But people from there are disproportionately visible because they fill roles that link urban and rural publics: market stall vendors, operators of tent restaurants in working-class neighborhoods, entrepreneurs in regional transportation, and truck-farm wholesalers. Despite suffering racially tinged snobbism, Huarochirí villagers regard themselves as progressive campesinos (‘peasants’) of Peruvian nationality, not as members of an indigenous “race.” They regard those who speak Quechua as *indios*, an intolerably ugly term of stigma. They deny that any such people live in Huarochirí or that they are descendants of any such. The “indios,” they say, were the builders of the archaeological tombs that dot the hillsides. These

ancient people, they say, died by mass suicide in protest against the lash of Spanish colonialism (Salomon 2002a).

The village of San Andrés de Tupicocha holds lands from about 2,500 meters (8,202 feet) high to about 4,800 meters (15,748 feet) on the westward flank of the Andes. It lies a day's bus ride southeast of Lima, at the headwaters of the Lurín River, in the central part of Huarochirí. Of the village's 1,416 residents (according to the 2007 census) perhaps half live exclusively in the community nucleus, located on a difficult secondary road at about 3,321 meters (10,895 feet; Stiglich 1922:1084). Despite its closeness to the capital and its partly "semiproletarian" way of life (Weismantel 1988), the village is poor in modern infrastructure, having received electricity only in 2004. In 2010 the single communal telephone was just starting to be augmented with private land lines.

San Andrés de Tupicocha is the name of three superimposed jurisdictions. It is a district (the smallest unit of national government administration), a municipality, and a recognized Peasant Community. The last of these is the main concern of this study. Under Peruvian law, a Peasant Community (what was called an Indigenous Community until 1969) is a self-governing corporation endowed with control of "immemorial" communal titles to land and water. Communities are often the legal vessels within which traditional forms of power dating back much farther than the republic, or even the Spanish colony, can be conserved. They are governed by what villagers call *costumbre*, best rendered as "customary law." The intricate kinship-based rules of customary law and local ritual are matters of no interest to the state, as long as state requirements such as taxation and the cadastral roll are fulfilled. The majority of Tupicochan agropastoralists belong to households enrolled as *comuneros*, or community stakeholders. In 2007 the number of enrolled households fell below 130. Despite creeping privatization, the Community still owes much of its subsistence to an intricate system of canals, terraces, and walled pastures under the communal regime, begun in pre-Hispanic antiquity and forever in process of improvement. It is the Peasant Community's chief duty to administer them. This provides a domain in which vernacular literacy subsists unsupervised by state agents.

For administering the commons, the Community relies upon a very deep-rooted system of non-state-based institutions: a system of ten *ayllus* or *parcialidades*. These are corporate descent groups on mainly patri-

lineal lines, each with its own elaborate internal hierarchy of office and seniority, of ritual, and of recordkeeping. It is as if the village were a league of ten proud, self-conscious teams. Only ayllu members can be comuneros, and the only way to join an ayllu is to have birthright eligibility. The different ayllus act as parties working in fraternal rivalry to complete their respective shares of every communal task: mending the pasture walls, building the bullring, installing pipes in the irrigation ditches, and so on. Above and beyond the workdays the ayllus owe to the Community as a whole, members also owe many laborious duties to the ayllu itself. Tupicocha's ayllus are lineal continuations of the ayllus of Checa as described in the circa 1608 Quechua Manuscript of Huarochirí. It is the ayllus which hold as insignia Tupicocha's famous khipus. Modern ayllus, as they document their myriad internal obligations and their services to the larger community, figure as the most important collective actors in the production of endogenous writings.

#### LINGUISTIC BACKGROUND

Huarochirí is known among readers for its singular Quechua-language document, the Huarochirí Manuscript (Salomon and Urioste 1991, and other editions; Martínez Chuquizana 1996; Taylor 1999). This is the only known book from South America which might be compared to *Popol Vuh* of the Mayans. It explains Huarochirí's pre-Christian religious tradition in "pastoral Quechua" as written (with many nonpastoral localisms) by an unknown indigenous person in or close to 1608 (Acosta Rodríguez 1987). It contains a treasure of myths about the *wakas*, or deified places, and about the clans of the ancient inhabitants, their priesthoods, and their fortunes under Inka and Spanish rule. Translations have been published in many languages, including English (Salomon and Urioste 1991), and it has a large exegetical literature. A 1966 Spanish translation by Peru's bilingual literary genius José María Arguedas (Arguedas and Duviols 1966) gave it fame among Peruvian intellectuals. Many of the myths and rituals explained in it are still living culture in the higher parts of the province (Ortiz Rescaniere 1980), and these are among the practices that generate rural writing (see chapter 1).

The ancestors of Huarochiranos, including the creators of the anonymous book, spoke both Quechua and an ethnic tongue of the Jaqaru (Aymara-family) group, now extinct (Adelaar 1994). They used Quechua as the lingua franca of Inka rule, and continued to speak it as a colo-

nial tongue. But they relinquished both tongues at a time they no longer remember. Today Huarochirí is monolingual in Spanish. Internal archives of communities in the region have yet to yield anything in either Andean language. The chronology of the shift away from American languages is unknown, but circumstances suggest a fairly complex process.

In 1839 a gazetteer-writing protosociologist, José María Córdova y Urrutia, perceived Huarochirí as overwhelmingly *indígena* (98.2 percent) and Tupicocha in particular as 100 percent “Indian” (1992:62, 72–73).<sup>2</sup> The national census of 1876 reported San Damián, which then contained all the villages studied intensively in this book, as 100 percent *indio* (Peru 1878:236). Although these studies are “language deaf,” it is unlikely that during the nineteenth century Quechua was totally extinguished, because in the nineteenth century language was one of the markers (along with dress and bodily traits) of Indianness. Had such writers encountered bilingual or Spanish-monolingual campesinos, they would probably have perceived at least some of them as *castas*, or *mestizos* (people of mixed “race”).

By 1940 the Peruvian state kept some linguistic records. In Huarochirí Province as a whole 88.2 percent of men and 91.2 percent of women were then reported as speakers of “Castilian.”<sup>3</sup> Only 0.3 percent of men and 0.8 percent of women were Quechua monolinguals. Only sixteen people in the whole province knew “Aymara” (which may refer to the old, Aymara-like ethnic tongue). More recent censuses report nearly uniform Spanish monolingualism. The main period of language shift therefore probably was the later nineteenth century through early twentieth. Today’s Huarochiranos think of Quechua as remote and foreign. They certainly share the Creole prejudice against it. When a stuttering man greeted Salomon at a party, the remark “He’s saying hello in Quechua!” got a big laugh. Huarochirí local vernacular is rich in words of Quechua origin. Such words are felt to be “authentic” and local, but not indigenous. Nobody we met was aware that their own province once had an Andean language other than Quechua, although many know that a pre-Quechua language survives (tenuously) in the adjacent Province of Yauyos.

#### “THE ROMANCE OF THE PRECISE”

The numerous manuscript books that Tupicochans write are no literary treasure trove. Many would look tedious to outsiders. They are mostly administrative papers: *actas* (minutes of meetings), account books, receipts,

and memoranda, plus some local histories. Nonetheless the popular attitude toward these writings differs from urbanites' indifferent acceptance of "paperwork." Modern campesinos bring to the bureaucratic-legalistic style of writing a devotion and enthusiasm that startle outsiders.

This has much to do with the corporate nature of the village. To be a comunero means to be a stakeholder in a legal entity, the *comunidad campesina*, which owns the pastures and canals on which villagers depend. Only children of the ten ayllus that compose the village have eligibility to become comuneros. Signing on as a comunero is a much weightier matter than just being a citizen. It entails thirty years of rigorous service, costly ritual obligations, and a succession of onerous terms as officer. Most of all, it demands work. Every comunero's livelihood depends on having the commons well maintained, for his or her family's labor and capital will be applied to them. To maintain and improve the shared infrastructure of pasturing and farming, including its administrative infrastructure, is to uphold both livelihood and solidarity. This is accomplished chiefly by *faenas* ('unpaid communal labor days'; Gelles 1984) levied on all the comuneros. Unpaid common labor is a reciprocity system, one in which a morally binding gift of labor is given to the community as a corporate entity and repaid by a combination of token ritual gifts (coca, etc.) with important use rights to the resources worked. In other places *faena* is usually called by the Quechua term *minka*, glossed as asymmetrical reciprocity (Mayer 2002:110–11).

A crucial point is that reciprocity hardly implies trust. On the contrary, Tupicochans are quite sure that if people can cheat they will. Moreover the administration of common resources inherently generates tension, because even without cheating, the village would still have sources of inequality and conflict. The root problem is that equal use rights in land and water are of unequal worth depending what private resources one brings to them. Some get extra value out of their membership because they own more livestock or can afford fertilizers, pesticides, and so on. "Have-not" comuneros feel the system is hard on them because it affords them bare subsistence resources while allowing some social peers to do better (e.g., by running small stores and extending credit). Until recently, it was routine for the men with the most cattle to hold the highest offices. Debts and grudges about bad marriages or failed business deals impede cooperation. Young men complain, with good reason, about being made to serve as officers before they have capitalized their households. Women

are gradually winning stronger roles in governance but many still feel and resent female marginality. (For example, there are now female heads of ayllus, but this usually occurs because no plausible male is available for the job.) Game-playing vis-à-vis powerful outside organizations irritates those with only local networks. Villagers often say their peers are *vivo* ('crafty') and *egoísta* ('selfish'). Although the comunero way of life has provided a measure of safety amid the historic lurches of Peru's economy, it is overall a poorish life, and one that makes formidable demands on one's freedom of action.

Villagers' willingness to do their share in the common interest therefore depends on strict accountability. For this reason, villagers see record-keeping as the very linchpin of communal life. Accounting is not the boring matter urbanites take it to be; it is the very heart of the social contract. When done faithfully and skillfully, it makes everything else possible. Moreover, good records help to secure equitable treatment by outside authorities. The village's land titles and other foundational papers are revered and current papers scrutinized critically. In the village hall, the allegorical mural which symbolizes the community has at its very center a pen, inkwell, and open manuscript book. Strong literacy is associated with self-defense against fraud and abuse. Writing is even spoken of as the *arma* ('weapon') of the community. Literacy is closely associated with dignity and social respect.

Love of writing, then, has much to do with faith in the power of exact and permanent knowledge. *Constancia* ('document of record'), is an omnipresent word. If asked why one must write down so many details, Tupicochans usually answer, "Para que conste" ('So it will be on record'). The word *constancia* connotes durable knowledge, a defense against errors, falsehoods, and forgetting. Producing a *constancia* is the culmination of every collective function. The function is not considered done without it: the document is not *about* the deed but *is* the deed. Considering local usage, one might define *constancias* as consubstantial records. *Constancias* trump all oral testimonies in cases of dispute.

In short, intravillage literacy is a tough, practical matter of mutual social control. But villagers' relation with writing could also be called a romance, in the sense that it embodies admiration, a maximalist commitment, and utopian hopes.

To court exactitude, Wallace Stevens suggests (as reproduced in the epigraph to this book), it is not enough to abandon "the tired romance

of imprecision" (1965 [1947]:353). Tupicochan writing indeed tolerates a modicum of "tired romance" in the form of civic bombast. But the core aesthetic of writing is an astringently plain one—"a rhetoric that convinces and appeals by adopting the language of antirhetoric" (Riles 2006:19, summarizing an argument from James Aho's 1985 book on the culture of accounting). The worth of precision comes into a villager's view when he scans the long record and sees the durable proof (*constancia*) of ever-emerging, enduring regularity and good faith. These moments are felt to have grandeur. Several Tupicochan rituals include the bringing together of objects understood as *constancias*: the joint presentation of all *kipus* on January 2, archival inventories at the *ayllu* and Community level, the joint display of all staffs of office on New Year's Eve, and the bringing together of all crosses on May 3. Jacques Derrida, in meditating on the nature of archives, called such events "consignations": moments when great accumulations of signs over time are gathered as "a single corpus . . . a synchrony in which all the elements articulate the unity of an ideal configuration" (1996:3).

Written records over the long haul manifest the cycles of production, construction, and solidarity in ritual. A complete year of recordkeeping, presented at the New Year's plenary meeting (*Huayrona*), is a beautiful thing, because it concretizes success in overcoming the myriad fights and hazards of the year to re-create the beloved virtual entity, the village. *Huayrona*, the highest annual day of monetary and moral reckoning, is "an appearance of Again." In it one glimpses the ever-returning, never-ending transcendent entity that endures even as fallible individuals come and go. If we suppose that ritual interaction with deities represents an idea of interaction tout court, the fact that such rituals are included in the accountable record shows how encompassing this idea is.

This book is primarily about what is Andean in graphic practice: habits developed outside immediate state and church supervision. For this reason we will give priority in these pages to the writings of the Andean kinship corporations, or *ayllus* (also called *parcialidades*). These small corporations exist below the threshold of legal recognition. The state, which recognizes the Community, takes no interest in its inner segmentation or its traditional rules about ritual and kinship. So when the *ayllu* or *parcialidad* laboriously creates a never-ending written simulacrum of itself, it does so out of a locally felt need. This lowest, unofficial tier of

the graphic regime therefore is the best place to learn what is vernacular about Andean literacy.

To say that vernacular writing emerges at the margin of the state hardly means the state is irrelevant. As Veena Das and Deborah Poole (2004) emphasize, the mountainous regions that Peru's viceroyalty and republic long marginalized are not by that token outside the state. Colonial and republican governments have always been able to tax and coerce the margin. Flags fly and mayors get salaries even in the neglected outback. What in the past made the margin marginal, was the state's one-sided, unreceptive relation to its racially stigmatized highland peasantry: it ruled but excluded. Traditionally, campesinos who passed from margins to centers of the state (e.g., ministerial offices, courts) were made—by a precisely graduated, half-conscious etiquette of disrespect—to feel unentitled and unworthy. Their business was slow tracked to the point of oblivion. To live in the margins of the state was to live within the state, but in a particular way. Since 2000, popular participation in the state has improved markedly, and some Peruvian observers think marginality is becoming a thing of the past. But it surely was the condition that shaped rural writing habits.

In a sense, then, the writing of unofficial ayllu books is a state practice at the level of customary law. The emulation of state norms within the intravillage conduct of Andean institutions, even when no official demands it, is marginal citizens' manner of approaching state power. If ayllu records partake of parliamentary order while they honor the deified mountains, they do so in quest of access and intelligibility before both powers. Historic distance from the state and neglect by it afforded a space in which idiosyncrasies—including Andean cultural traditions—could continue to evolve. But when these peculiarities color peasants' approach to state centers, leaving "provincial" traces in their writings, the result has been that their writings and speeches were devalued.

In the first and second chapters, we will emphasize the development of Andean usages in writing along this margin (Larson 2004:54n29). In chapters 3 through 5, we will trace the particular ways such writings encounter—or rather, misencounter—the literacy of officialdom, and follow into the smallest details of language the discord between peasant and state uses of text. In the sixth and seventh chapters, we will concentrate upon texts of popular historiography: "homemade" texts through which

Huarochiranos look back upon their experiences, from ayllus to wider webs of power and loyalty.

## METHODS

*Grafismo* is a handy Romance-language (Spanish, but also French, Italian, and Portuguese) expression with no English equivalent. It means a person's or a group's particular habits and orientations in using scripts. This study is intended as a historical ethnography of an Andean grafismo. The project consequently puts on the table a range of interests somewhat beyond those of the NLS debate proper. While sharing with NLS researchers an interest in the way the institutional vectors of literacy shape so-called literacy effects, we are also interested in the degree to which changing grafismo reflects and shapes broader cultural dispositions.

We adopt the pluralist premise of Keith Basso's 1974 proposal for an "ethnography of writing." We assume that some form of literacy exists whenever people use a signary (more or less widely standardized set of visible signs) to encode information, including the case of Tupicocha's ayllu khipus. We are interested in capturing a wide range of culturally programmed script-using behaviors; that is, in NLS terminology, *literacy practices*. In the field we sought to capture a wide range of *literacy events* and their products. From them we will advance generalizations about the informational exchange spheres which each practice of literacy mediates, or in other words, define each literacy practice's *domain*. Each sphere of information exchange, or domain, can also be characterized as a *network* or *graphic community*, by analogy to speech community. Like the concept of speech community, the concept of graphic community can be scaled up or down to adjust to the scope of a code's application, from broad lingua franca usage to the highly specific vernacular whose peculiarities mark local or other group boundaries. By filling each of these conceptual categories with ethnographic instances, it is possible to get an idea of the role of writing as the actual tissue of social exchange.

We have prioritized endogenous literate production, at different scales—from intrahousehold jottings and letters, through the business of corporate kin groups and rural neighborhoods, up to Community papers which concern self-government and often attest interaction with estates, merchants, the state, NGOs, and the church. Data collection as detailed below was conducted by agreement with village authorities and individual owners or authors of papers. Although Community-level archives are

documents of record, and from Lima's viewpoint constitute official records, they are not locally considered public, because villagers are anxious about the security of their land titles. The tools of inquiry included interviews, inventories, photography, and observation, followed by paleographic transcription or audio transcription and systematic excerpting. Procedures for analyzing the corpus included genre "typologization" (categorization of writings by their genre templates); textual analysis for indices of articulation with nonwritten behavior; and dialectological and sociolectal study of fine-grain traits such as orthography, formatting, and syntax as well as research into indices of standardization or improvisation in literacy events.

We followed classic ethnographic fieldwork practices of anthropology and sociolinguistics in tracking writing through multiple functional domains. Sampling was not random but directed to selecting consultants with varied angles of view on literacy events: ex-Community secretaries, unofficial scribes, lay and official teachers and catechists, *camachicos* (an obsolescent term for past and present presidents) of the ten ayllu, "peasant intellectuals," and less-lettered peasants. Data collection proceeded by observation and semistructured interviewing, and regular attendance at events where writing acts are expected.

The fieldwork was done in discontinuous stints from 1994 through 2002 by Salomon, an anthropologist, and 2001 through 2006 by Niño-Murcia, a sociolinguist. The study began as a by-product of Salomon's inquiry into the alphabetic context of Tupicocha village's patrimonial khipus (locally called *quipocamayos*), published as *The Cord Keepers* (Salomon 2004a). The chapters developed mostly by Salomon are those concerning writing in self-governance and the interface between khipus and paper (chapters 1–2) as well as those on endogenous history-writing (chapters 6–7). In our search for alphabetic sources that might be functionally analogous to the cord records, or might comment upon them, it became evident that Tupicocha Village contained an immense deposit of endogenous writing, particularly at the ayllu level. The evidence also included, at lesser levels of detail, the archives of the provincial capital Huarochirí, the Checa Community of San Damián, the Concha Community of San Damián, the Community of San Francisco de Sunicancha, and the Community of Santiago de Tuna (the last at both Community and ayllu level). We also studied household papers, which sometimes treat noninstitutional family matters as being subject to the norm of *constancia*.

While many colonial and modern judicial or administrative papers have served as sources about ayllus, no previous study has examined ayllus' internal documentation. Within Tupicocha, all the archives of the corporate descent groups were inventoried. Key volumes were copied cover to cover, by permission, and selected passages were extracted. Extensive photographs were taken to illustrate the evolution of formatting and detailed writing practice. This material was studied by sociolinguistic methods by Niño-Murcia.

Niño-Murcia developed the sociolinguistic parts of the research (chiefly chapters 3–5). Prior to fieldwork in Huarochirí, Niño-Murcia carried out a quantitative analysis of documents from a copy of a Tupicochan manuscript of 201 pages previously photocopied by Salomon. This initial textual study was complemented with fieldwork (2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006) to obtain a clear understanding of the relationship that existed between its inhabitants' language use, social life, and literacy practices. Data collection on these points took place through varied techniques: participant observation in varied village activities (2001, 2003, 2004, 2005, and 2006); formal and informal interviews with different age groups, school and classrooms visits; informal interviews with school personnel; interviews with parents and observations in homes; observation of student-to-student, student-to-teacher, and student-to-group interactions; written annotations and audio and video recordings of writing events; study of interviewee comments on samples of written texts; study of school and newspaper records; and personal narratives of the literacy experiences that shaped adults' literacy practices. Spontaneous incidents of metalanguage also provided clues to local norms.

From the viewpoint of Tupicochans, the work of ethnographers is in some respects also a work of *constancia*. Following their preferences, we refer to people using their real names except where a legitimate interest might be prejudiced by mentioning them. In translating local writings we have respected the sentence boundaries and punctuation, and as much of the syntax as we could, together with original capitalization. The explanatory paragraphs discuss nontranslatable features that give the prose its peculiar savor, including local lexicon and nonstandard spelling.