

In This Issue

This issue of *Hispanic American Historical Review* examines the interactions between Andean peoples and various elite groups—Spanish colonial administrators, postindependence national elites, twentieth-century scholars and researchers—seeking to understand and “see” those peoples. The essays consider the methods and sources those elites employed and the motives with which they did so.

Jeremy Ravi Mumford poses an intriguing methodological question: can anthropologists and historians use colonial-period court cases to recover indigenous legal concepts and practices rooted in the preconquest period? Examining two such cases, he finds that what tends to determine their utility for present-day ethnohistorians is the degree to which Spanish interests, private or public, were affected by the case’s outcome. In the first case, indigenous communities went to court over the question of who should provide the labor to maintain the system of roads and inns (*tambos*) used by travelers through Peru. In the absence of major Spanish stakeholders in the case, the arguments presented offer suggestive hints of Andean concepts of “mountain-side” and “water-side” peoples and jurisdictions but do not delve deeply into those concepts. The second case, which raised the question of where and to whom migrant groups (*mitimaes*) should pay their encomienda obligations, directly affected the interests of Spanish encomenderos and the colonial state. In order to adjudicate this case (and incidentally advance his own interests, since he was one of the encomenderos affected), Spanish official Polo de Ondegardo undertook a close examination of migratory practices under the Inca. His findings, which distinguished between groups who had migrated of their own volition and those who did so under orders by the Inca, and between the varying property rights of those groups, are still studied and cited by historians and ethnographers today.

Approaching Andean court records from a different perspective, Alan Durston catalogs the corpus of “mundane” (as opposed to religious or literary) documents written in Quechua that have been found in those records. He

reports the existence of 12 documents or groups of documents, consisting of petitions, letters, and notarial material. This is a very small number in comparison to the thousands of indigenous-language texts (in Nahuatl, Yucatec Maya, and Mixtec) that scholars have uncovered in Mexico. Durston suggests that indigenous-language texts are rarer in Peru for two reasons. First, indigenous town councils, which were more likely to conduct business and keep records in local languages, played a larger role in colonial administration in Mexico than in Peru. Second, nonalphabetic means of indigenous record keeping, particularly the *quipu* system of knotted cords, continued to be widely used in the postconquest period (indeed, in some Andean areas into the early 1900s), thus reducing the need for written records. Despite these differences, Durston argues that the existing corpus of documents represents “only the tip of the iceberg” and that many more Quechua-language texts lie hidden in the archives, waiting to be discovered.

Oscar Chamosa turns our attention to the far southern frontier of the Inca empire, the Calchaquí Valley of northwestern Argentina. Nominally conquered by the Spanish in the late 1500s, the Calchaquíes were seen and administered by the colonial state as indigenous. Beginning with independence, however, the people of the valley underwent a process of “creolization” that took various forms. In their negotiations with the Argentine state, the valley’s residents presented themselves not in ethnic terms but rather as citizens, soldiers, and communal landowners. Nineteenth-century Argentine anthropologists continued to describe the Calchaquíes as indigenous, but by the end of the century provincial elites and state officials, anxious to promote the notion of Argentina as a “white” republic, had dropped references to the valley’s indigenous heritage and started to refer to its inhabitants as “criollos.” That designation was cemented by anthropological and folklore researchers in the first half of the 1900s, who asserted that the valley’s deep roots in colonial Hispanic culture derived from Europe. Thus did an indigenous Andean people become white.

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Editor Kathryn Litherland. We hope to maintain the high standards that they set. We also hope to continue the journal's mission of seeking out, identifying, and publishing the most innovative and engaging work being produced in the field of Latin American history. Please join us in that quest by sending us your ideas, proposals, criticisms, suggestions, and above all your manuscripts. We look forward to hearing from you.

