

ANDEAN COSMOPOLITANS: INDIGENOUS JOURNEYS TO THE HABSBURG ROYAL COURT  
 José Carlos de la Puente

In 1937, fourteen delegates of the peasant community of Huasicancha carried their demands for full citizenship across the central Andes to the capital city of Lima, Peru. Addressing the president in writing, the *comuneros* denounced neighboring landowners for encroaching on communal lands and local authorities for unjustly imprisoning the community's elected representatives. They reminded the president of their rights as "citizens of a free and democratic republic" and "members of an officially recognized indigenous community." Their own "republic" was in fact older than the Peruvian Republic, they argued, holding land deeds going back to 1607, when they were still labeled "Indians." What is more, the community had honored its dues and contributions to the state since "time immemorial," thus upholding the fundamental ideals of the old monarchical and republican "compacts." A photograph of the delegates was taken at Lima's train station to assure the president that they had made the long journey. This was neither their first trip nor their last venture into the center of state power.

The *comuneros* of Huasicancha were tapping into a deep current of native Andean politics. They modeled themselves on a profound tradition of local polities seeking redress, favor, and self-government in an increasingly centralized political system. My project shows that this tradition, though weakened and reduced in its scope after centuries of colonialism, dates to the early modern era, when indigenous leaders, commoners, and communal representatives began to embark on analogous trips, journeying not only to the viceregal court in Lima but also to Habsburg royal court in Spain. Their journeys suggest that there are broader lessons to be learned about how colonial and postcolonial politics connect in the Andes. I am applying for a full-time award of twelve months to rewrite my dissertation into a book.

**Contribution** / My project is the first in-depth study about the travels and sojourns of native Andeans to the Habsburg royal court during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It challenges dominant narratives in Andean Ethnohistory that, for the past three or four decades, have been often predicated upon the regional case-study approach. I argue that this approach has done little to dispel influential (mis)representations of colonial origin in which indigenous communities such as Huasicancha appear as isolated entities, anchored in particular regions of the Andes and having little interaction with one another. For the most part, colonial Indians remain inward-looking subjects whose political horizons seem parochial at best.

In contrast, the story that I tell in *Andean Cosmopolitans* unfolds simultaneously in distant settings of the early modern Spanish world. The focus is less on fixed ethnic and legal identifications, or on discontinuous places and regions, as it is on fluid identities, exchanges, interconnections, and the interplay between global and local scenarios. *Andean Cosmopolitans* reveals the role played by native Andeans in the formation of a "legal Atlantic," an organic network of litigants, judges, lawyers, attorneys, and ideas of law and justice bridging courtrooms in Spain and the Andes.

The project builds upon recent historiography exploring indigenous literacy and legal activism in the colonial world. These new approaches, though mainly restricted to Spanish American settings, discuss the active engagement of literate natives with the magistrates, lawyers, clerics, and notaries who reproduced the colonial order. These works broaden the concept of the "Lettered City," previously limited to Spanish "wielders of pen and paper." I, however, shift the emphasis from rural native communities to the urban milieus in which most of the transatlantic travelers and their legal allies were born, had lived prior to the trip, or visited after crossing the ocean. By examining their multiple interactions with royal officials, I show how travelers with strong connections to colonial bureaucracies in Peru and Spain created new power structures and institutions, as well as novel forms of reproducing urban identities and of articulating legal and political discourses about the "Indian Nation" of Peru. Thus, my work speaks to current trends in the literature by adding an unmatched level of substance as well as an Atlantic scope to the study of indigenous participation in the making of colonial legal cultures.

My aim is to understand the different alternatives for political mobilization and collective transformation that this legal activism made available to the native peoples of the Andes after the Spanish

conquest. These Andean journeys are an avenue to explore how natives, by engaging with colonial law, shaped the Habsburg Empire, turning themselves into state makers of a special kind. The project expands “the state” beyond its usual meaning of centralized institutions of sovereign authority to include individuals participating in concrete interactions embodying state actions—i.e., the administration of justice. *Andean Cosmopolitans* brings to the fore the communal magistrates and attorneys, legal agents, solicitors, and ambassadors who played an active part in gaining access to the Spanish system of justice for native Andeans. They influenced Crown policies at the highest level—that under the sphere of action of the Supreme Council of the Indies—turning stays at the court into a negotiation about the nature of the state being implemented in the New World. These travelers were more than mere litigants or petitioners. They were actively transforming the power relationships in the Spanish empire.

This Atlantic legal activism is one of the keys to understand why Spanish colonialism endured for three hundred years in the Andes with very few open challenges. From the point of view of the native communities and an individuals that engaged with the justice of the king, this came at a very high cost—forced labor in mercury and silver mines, for instance—yet there was simply too much at stake in allowing or contributing to the demise of a system that, to a significant degree, offered legal redress, helped reduce intra- and interethnic conflict, curbed the excesses of native leaders, clerics, colonists and bureaucrats, and, ultimately, set the limits of colonial exploitation.

**Research /** My study relies heavily on previously unexamined archival sources. I have gone beyond the typical analysis of the occasional petition or the individual traveler. The lives of about one hundred of these voyagers from many regions of the Andes visiting the royal court between 1530 and 1700 form the bulk of my investigation. By piecing together their stories, I uncovered patterns that would have otherwise remained obscure. The research process first took me to the General Archive of the Indies in Seville, where I worked with court cases, letters, petitions, travel licenses, royal decrees, and bookkeeping ledgers. The archives of the Royal Palace in Madrid hold native petitions, while the Spanish National Archives store hundreds of powers of attorney endorsed by indigenous litigants to their legal representatives in Spain. To my knowledge, no scholar has examined them before. Notarial and judicial records in various Peruvian archives held myriad similar documents. In Lima, I worked mainly with court cases, land titles, and the little-known papers of the Caja General de Censos, a fund supported by liens on Indian communal property. Several regional archives shed light on the different mechanisms available to claimants and petitioners who reached the viceregal and royal courts from distant parts of the Andes. The reconstruction of these transatlantic connections offers a window into the intimate workings of the Spanish imperial machinery as early modern indigenous people experienced it. Accordingly, the book follows a structure that takes the reader from the local into the imperial dimension.

Chapter 1 reconstructs how native groups developed internal mechanisms such as the allocation of communal resources through municipal councils, the acquisition of urban and rural property, and the election and training of specialized officials, to insert themselves into the system of justice. Chapter 2 places such communities within larger networks allowing for the circulation of ideas of justice and law in the Spanish Atlantic. I pay special attention to the social relationships, institutions, and practices that sustained such networks. Chapter 3 turns the viceregal court of Lima into the main setting to demonstrate the capacity of lettered Indians and legal intermediaries to connect rural communities with Spain and channel a novel discourse about the “Indian Nation” that reflected their position within an emerging indigenous leadership. Chapter 4 explores identity politics in an Atlantic setting. It focuses on the travelers’ participation in the construction of basic categories of rule such as *indio*, *cacique* (native lord), and legally *miserable* (poor or wretched), which they deployed at the royal court to make their journey and stay in Spain possible and secure other privileges. Chapter 5 delves into the apparent paradox of issuing royal orders forbidding native lords and commoners from embarking to the Iberian Peninsula, while preventing metropolitan authorities of the Council of the Indies and the House of Trade from forcing these visitors to return. Chapter 6 analyses the “scene” of the interview with the king to illustrate how ideas of law, justice, and empire crystalized within the network of Indian litigants and petitioners. The “interview” is a commentary on royal justice and the nature of the Habsburg state.

**Methods and Work Plan** / This grant will allow me to take time away from teaching during the 2015 academic year. The project started as a dissertation, but it is undergoing significant revisions, including the reworking of the original first chapter into two new chapters and the publication of one section of Chapter 3 as a separate article. While the archival research for Chapters 5-6 is mostly complete, Chapter 2-4 still require further research and rethinking, especially Chapter 3. After the dissertation was defended, a handful of monographs on indigenous literacy and legal activism were published, modifying the historiographical debate and hinting at new sources (two books by well-established scholars on related topics are expected to appear this year). I have been gathering and processing this new influx of information while keeping an active publication agenda and fulfilling my teaching responsibilities.

I plan on spending the summer and fall of 2014 completing archival research, updating my readings on colonial Latin American and Atlantic History, and making the last revisions to Chapter 1, which has been accepted for publication in an academic journal under the title "That which Belongs to All: Khipus, Community, and Indigenous Legal Activism in the Early Colonial Andes." Nonetheless, the tentative publication date for this article in *The Americas* (January 2015) is contingent upon sending the revised version before June of this year. I am also awaiting the second round of reader reports for a related piece on indigenous literacy and municipal councils, to be published in Spanish by the National Autonomous University of Mexico (2015), granted a revised version is submitted by the end of the year.

For this summer, I have been awarded a Research Enhancement Grant and departmental funds for a three-week research trip to Cuzco, Peru (July), and for obtaining digital reproductions of key sources from Peru's National Archives, both needed to rewrite Chapters 2-4. For Chapter 3, particularly, I need further evidence to support my claim that, by the late seventeenth century, Lima's Indian elites of non-Inca ancestry had replaced their counterparts in Cuzco as the dominant "indigenous" power in Peru.

With NEH support and course release from my institution starting in 2015, I will spend my leave incorporating this final round of research and rewriting full time in Austin. The suggested work plan consists of three main phases. For Chapters 2-4, I estimate two months of work per chapter, including the integration of materials gathered in Cuzco this July. For Chapters 5-6, I estimate one month of work per chapter. The remaining four months will be spent strengthening the Introduction and Conclusion sections in light of the new scholarship and of my colleagues' suggestions (see résumé for conference and seminar presentations of my work) as well as completing an overall revision of the manuscript for publication. I anticipate that, at the conclusion of my Faculty Award research year, the manuscript will be ready for consideration by a university press.

**Competencies, Skills, and Access** / I am a native speaker of Spanish and a scholar with several years of experience working with sixteenth- and seventeenth-century documents. I have also conducted research in Cuzco's Regional Archive before. I published my first monograph in 2007 and I am the coeditor of a recent volume on the use of knotted-strings or *khipu* during the colonial period. I have the skills and training necessary to finish this project successfully within the given timeframe.

**Final Product and Dissemination** / *Andean Cosmopolitans* is a scholarly monograph intended primarily for specialists in the fields of colonial Latin America and Andean and Mesoamerican Ethnohistory. It should be of interest to researchers of the Early Modern Atlantic world, the Spanish Atlantic, and students of colonialism and the exchange of peoples and ideas in transnational settings. Some of its chapters should also appeal to scholars of migration, Indian-State relations, and indigenous literacy and legal activism in contemporary Latin America. The book should also be accessible to graduate students in history, anthropology, and Latin American Studies. Three different university presses have expressed interest after reading Chapter 1. One has even extended an offer for a pre-contract. Interest in my work is also reflected in that, as stated, one section of Chapter 3 of the original dissertation will be published as a stand-alone article in the peer-reviewed journal *Colonial Latin American Review* this spring.

**Statement of eligibility** / Texas State University is a Hispanic-Serving Institution, as determined by the Department of Education and the data on file with the National Center for Education Statistics.

José Carlos de la Puente  
NEH Faculty Award - Bibliography

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