

Of Colonial Notaries, Inca Utopias, and Emerging Indigenous Elites: Some Noteworthy Titles in Andean Historiography

BURNS, Kathryn — *Into the Archive: Writing and Power in Colonial Peru*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010. Pp. 246.

GALINDO, Alberto Flores — *In Search of an Inca: Identity and Utopia in the Andes*. Edited and translated by Carlos Aguirre, Charles F. Walker, and Wyllie Hiatt. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010. Pp. 270.

KLEIN, Herbert S. — *A Concise History of Bolivia*. Second edition. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. 360.

The three titles reviewed here focus on aspects of the Andean past, and each one presents remarkably varying approaches to writing about history. Herbert S. Klein's *A Concise History of Bolivia* is the latest and greatest incarnation of a staid national narrative by an exceptionally knowledgeable expert. Alberto Flores Galindo died in 1986, but his influential *In Search of an Inca: Identity and Utopia in the Andes* is an important collection of essays only now available to English readers with this translation. Finally, Kathryn Burns offers *Into the Archive: Writing and Power in Colonial Peru*, an intriguing exploration of colonial notaries and the bureaucratic foundations of Spanish imperial authority in the Andes. Each of these three volumes—offering some newer ideas and interpretations along with older ones—are important additions (though not necessarily brand new ones) to Andean historiography.

First consider *A Concise History of Bolivia* by Herbert S. Klein, a solid national history now in its second edition. It remains a solid installment in Cambridge University Press's excellent *Concise Histories* series; however, this is actually the fourth version of Klein's profile of Bolivia, as this particular "concise history" was first published as *Bolivia: The Evolution of a Multi-Ethnic Society* in 1982 (and updated in 1992) by Oxford University Press. The first eight chapters originate from the Oxford editions, but the first Cambridge edition ended with chapter nine, covering 1982-2002. The latest—and possibly last edition by Klein—covers the remarkable changes that took place in Bolivia between 2002 and 2010.

Is it too soon for Klein to offer a balanced historian's appraisal of this recent period? He acknowledges in his preface to the Cambridge second edition that

“unanticipated developments” might derail some of his conclusions concerning Bolivia’s more recent history. Nevertheless, if any single scholar can be counted on to render a reliable assessment of the last decade’s developments in Bolivia, that person would be Herbert S. Klein. His career has been long and fruitful, and today he is the Governor Morris Professor Emeritus of History at Columbia University, a fitting honor for an astonishingly prolific (22 books and 163 articles!) and noteworthy historian of Latin America in general, and Bolivia in particular. As Klein points out in the preface, “I felt that I could offer some insights, even at this early stage in the process of change, based on my reading of the past and my long experience with this country that has fascinated me for most of my academic career” (p. x).

Even if Klein never completes a third edition, the second edition of *A Concise History of Bolivia* will serve as an admirable distillation of his extensive knowledge in an engaging narrative destined to endure for the foreseeable future. Obviously any single volume national history will fail to satisfy all readers, but this book is an introduction—and a *concise* one at that—to Bolivian history. Klein’s interpretations reflect his areas of specialization (social, demographic, and economic history), but other aspects of the past are examined where appropriate. This reviewer tried to find some important exclusions and/or erroneous inclusions, but gave up quickly in favor of enjoying a smoothly written overview of one of Latin America’s most ethnically complex societies.

The unifying theme in this survey is the resilience of ethnic complexity in Bolivia. The population of the southern Andes defied easy categorization even prior to the Spanish arrival, leading Klein to label Bolivia a “complex amalgam” (p. xi). Chapter 1 does an outstanding job of summarizing the pre-Columbia development of indigenous civilizations within a challenging environment. By the time of Pizarro’s arrival the southern Andes was home to about three million people representing numerous cultural and linguistic groups—this despite an ongoing Inca “Quechuanization” campaign to wipe out Aymara and other cultures in the decades prior to the Spanish invasion. As Klein explains, “[T]here were limits to the Inca expansion, and these were defined more by social and economic organization than by military activities” (p. 20).

Chapters 2 and 3 outline the conquest and its consequences, in particular the development of colonial Upper Peru’s silver mining sector around Potosí, the fabled “Mountain of Silver.” Sadly, Bolivia’s best economic years took place during an era of often brutal colonial exploitation that saw catastrophic indigenous population declines followed by modest rebounds. The consequences of this included internal migrations and the creation of new racial categories through miscegenation; ultimately the “amalgam” of Bolivian society became even more multifaceted, with race being defined less by biology and more by culture: food eaten, clothing worn, and language spoken. Simple categories—white, Indian, *cholo*—lost much meaning by the late colonial period. Readers new to Bolivia’s ability to defy conventional expectations will perhaps be surprised by Klein’s nuanced description of Túpac Amaru’s rebellion of 1780-81, which is often and understandably characterized as simply an “Indian” uprising. According to

Klein, “It was multiclass, multicaste, and extremely well-led... It was, in short, an independence revolt” (p. 74).

That particular rebellion failed, but Bolivia emerged as a nation-state years later, in 1825, liberated in large measure by patriot forces from other regions of South America. The national period is covered in Chapters 4 through 10, and to his credit Klein again avoids oversimplifying the troubled (some would say disastrous) republican period. Independence brought with it an economic depression in the absence of imperial Spain’s customs union, and Bolivia’s troubles only deepened with a series of ruinous nineteenth century wars (mainly against Chile) and endemic internal political turmoil. Klein is frank in his portrayal of this record of failure, but he takes great pains to balance it with considered reappraisals. A fine example of this is his analysis of General Mariano Malgarejo, possibly the most notorious of Bolivia’s nineteenth-century dictators. Rather than recount colorful stories (always fun but possibly apocryphal) of Malgarejo’s alcohol-fueled “barbarism,” Klein instead puts the general’s economic policies in perspective. Sure, Malgarejo might have been an unstable drunken menace from time to time, but he was only one of many such men. And his classical liberal economic policies—including the wholesale privatization of indigenous lands—were designed to pull the nation out of a fifty-year economic depression. Further, these policies seemed to work, at least for a while, albeit with a big social cost. Nevertheless, “The political overthrow of Malgarejo, when it came in 1870, brought no serious change to any of the policies that had been initiated in his six years of office” (p. 137).

Klein’s survey concludes with an appraisal of the recent development of “a multiethnic democracy” in Bolivia between 1982 and 2002, and the subsequent emergence of Evo Morales Ayma and his *Movimiento al Socialismo* (MAS) party over the last decade. Even the cover speaks to this startling transformation with a 2010 photo of Bolivia’s parliament in session debating that year’s historic anti-racism law: The social “amalgam” of Bolivia’s diverse population is at long last finally reflected in the makeup of federal legislators. Although Klein’s verdict concerning Evo Morales is cautionary—“The MAS party and its leaders have become increasingly willing to attack fundamental democratic institutions in their commitment to their vision of a revolutionary society” (p. 295)—he acknowledges some much needed reforms have taken place under Morales, in particular the 2009 constitution, which is based on “respect, dignity, and the recognition of individual and traditional community rights,” and which “declared that Bolivia was a unitary state based on communal plurinational law that was democratic, decentralized, and with autonomous regions” (p. 291).

Like Bolivia, the modern Andean nations of Peru and Ecuador were also once home to significant pre-Columbian Andean cultures, specifically the famous Inca. The enduring mythic prestige of this pre-Columbian dynasty was explored in the 1980s by Alberto Flores Galindo, a Peruvian historian and public intellectual who explored the similarities and differences between colonial (Túpac Amaru II) and modern (the Shining Path) rebel movements in the region. The fruits of his work were first published in Peru as *Buscando un Inca. Identidad y utopía en los Andes* (1986). This important if flawed collection of essays was based in great measure

on UNESCO Project No. 2277—"Andean utopia"—carried out by Flores Galindo in the early 1980s (p. 255). *Buscando un Inca* won Cuba's Casa de las Americas Prize in 1986 and the Clarence Haring Prize from the American Historical Association in 1991. Sadly it remained inaccessible to English readers until the 2010 publication by Cambridge University Press of *In Search of an Inca*, capably translated by professors Carlos Aguirre, Charles F. Walker, and Willie Hiatt.

Flores Galindo was a historian of his own native Peru, where he taught at the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú in Lima before his untimely death in 1990. He was also a public intellectual—and man of the left—who heard the echoes of catastrophic colonial rebellions in the rising revolutionary clamor of his own time. His own "search for an Inca" led him to examine the influence of utopian thought at different points in Peruvian history. The first of these utopias was *Tihuantinsuyu*, realm of the Inca, a relatively young pre-Columbian civilization when the Spanish arrived in the early 1530s, but one with deep cultural roots in Andean antiquity. The fabled reign of the first Sapa Inca, the great Manco Cápac, was already veiled in mysticism long before the Spanish conquest. An imperial cult blossomed around his heirs through the fifteenth century, especially with Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui, who came to the throne in 1438. He aggressively expanded the "Land of the Four Corners" until it encompassed a broad swath between the Pacific coast and the eastern slopes of the Andes. Meanwhile an imperial priesthood promoted the idea of *pachacuti*, an Andean concept of "radical and dramatic social changes" (p. 252), and of time as endlessly repeating cycles, with the sacred Inca at the fulcrum of creation, and destined to rule the Andean world despite the catastrophic invasion of the *mistis* (Spanish). "Yes, the *mistis* triumphed, but the Incas didn't disappear," noted Flores Galindo. "They still exist... The Promised Land was there, beyond the mountains, somewhere in the jungle" (pp.50-51).

The myth of the eternal Inca developed further as Pachacuti Inca Yupanqui's reign (1438-71) gave way to that of Inca Túpac Yupanqui (1471-93), but time seemed to run out for the Inca. Huayna Cápac, the last uncontested Sapa Inca, ruled from 1493 to 1527 as Spanish conquistadors swept westward across the Caribbean, and he expanded Tihuantinsuyu farther north even as Cortés toppled the Aztec empire in faraway Mexico. And then Huayna Capac died of a mysterious illness in 1527. It has been speculated that smallpox traveled to Peru in advance of the Spanish along a chain of evacuation and trade routes radiating south from the defeated Aztec capital of Tenochtitlan. Whatever the case, a civil war ensued between two rival claimants to the throne. Atahualpa Inca emerged victorious, but only for a short time. In 1531 he met with Francisco Pizarro at Cajamarca, where thousands of ambushed Inca fighters perished before Atahualpa was captured, ransomed for a fortune, and ultimately murdered by the Spanish. As Flores Galindo notes, "This is the origin of the trauma that continues to mark the memory of the first encounter between Europe and the Andes... The conquest was a *pachacuti*—the inversion of order—for many Andean people" (p. 22-23).

Pizarro installed the puppet Manco Inca to legitimize his own authority, but Manco rebelled and withdrew to Vilcabamba, where he established a government in exile and a legend, if not an enduring stronghold for his lineage. A new Inca

dynasty endured there until Viceroy Francisco de Toledo crushed Vilcabamba in 1579. His grisly staged execution of Manco's heir, Túpac Amaru I, was intended to demonstrate the final destruction of Tihuantinsuyu, but that did not happen. Instead the enduring legend of a reborn "world transformer" would linger. It was widely believed that one day a new Inca would return to set right what Spain made wrong and finally social justice would be restored in the Andes. Until then, noted Flores Galindo, "Subjected to domination, Andean peoples used memory as a mechanism to preserve (or build) their identity" (p. 6).

More precisely, popular memories of the Inca Empire were central to most if not all noteworthy Andean colonial insurrections. Flores Galindo examined many, beginning with the Taqui Onqoy movement of the 1560s, before looking at the two main Andean-wide revolts against Spain: Juan Santos Atahualpa's insurgency beginning in 1742 and the much larger and more destructive Great Rebellion, initiated several decades later by the remarkable Túpac Amaru II in 1780. Flores Galindo explores both revolutionary projects in detail, and shows the influence of both indigenous and non-Andean spiritual beliefs on shaping rebellious popular aspirations in the late colonial period. Juan Santos in particular blended indigenous spiritual traditions with his own variant of Joachim of Fiore's apocalyptic visions, and his ideas were appealing enough to generate an insurgency that started around 1752 and lasted several years. Unfortunately for the aspiring "Apu Inca," he was unable to promote his project beyond remote regions of vicerealty, and so his rebellion fizzled out even though he eluded capture. By contrast Túpac Amaru II's rebellion of 1780-81 was much more widespread and would not be quelled so easily.

Pachacuti, once the name of the ninth Sapa Inca, became a term with much broader meaning in the Andes. Alberto Flores Galindo studied Andean upheavals of the eighteenth century because he wanted to better understand Peru of the 1980s. Had he lived another decade he would have watched the sad spectacle of the Shining Path's downfall around the same time as the Soviet Union began its rapid collapse. Flores Galindo did witness the beginning, however, and speculated, "Shining Path was like a lightning bolt across a clear sky [in Peru]...because the Shining Path came from Andean territories, they offered a peculiar reading of Marxism. They did not see revolution as Marx or Lenin envisioned it, but rather as synonymous with Pachacuti" (pp. 222-23).

Popular memories of Tihuantinsuyu acquired warm halos during the long colonial and post-colonial ages of dark mines and overseers with whips. By contrast popular memories of the Shining Path movement of the 1980s and 1990s have not aged as well, and this is the one glaring weakness of Flores Galindo's analysis: His overly generous estimation of a notorious organization that even he admitted to be "vertical and authoritarian." Nevertheless, "Messianism is authoritarian," he argued, "you take it or leave it. There is no in between... To the poorest (the favorite recruits) and most disenfranchised belonged a shining future... The revolution—like pachacuti or Apocalypse—carries with it weeping, pain, suffering, and death. The old had to be destroyed to make room for the new" (pp. 225, 227).

In fairness to Flores Galindo, such conclusions made a kind of sense in the mid-80s, in the face of racist “Andean feudalism” and gross social injustice, and before the Shining Path’s murderous rampages gave way to the capture in 1992 of Comandante Gonzalo (Abimael Guzmán), the notorious philosophy professor turned guerrilla prince and leader of the Shining Path movement. Few today in Peru, not even “the poorest” (main victims of both rebel insurgents and military counterinsurgents) cherish the memory of Guzmán’s late-Cold War fanatic crusade. On a more prescient note, though, Flores Galindo’s analysis of the Shining Path struggle did anticipate the disturbing Orwellian undercurrents of the current global War on Terror by almost two decades. A succession of Peruvian governments branded the Shining Path insurgents “terrorists” and denied them (and anyone suspected of aiding them) basic legal rights, leading to a humanitarian crisis of grotesque proportions: “The number of [resulting] deaths... betrayed the often hidden reality of a country in which some citizens were more equal than others and racism contaminated human relations” (pp. 241-42). In this sense, even readers who take a dim view of Flores Galindo’s romantic view of Shining Path might find important insights in his reflections about “terrorism,” both the illegal type carried out by terrorists and the licit yet equally deadly state sponsored varieties.

Thus, despite its few shortcomings, *In Search of an Inca* has much to offer the thoughtful reader, and is well worth examining, and not just for those with an explicit interest in Incas. Another title with broader appeal—for historians at least—than seems immediately obvious is *Into the Archive: Writing and Power in the Colonial Archive*, by Kathryn Burns. At first glance, perhaps, the history of Spain’s colonial notaries and other paper-shuffling bureaucrats does not compare favorably to sweeping national narratives and tales of apocalyptic high-altitude race wars, but Burns confidently invites readers to join her on an intellectual adventure. It seems that she spent a long time convincing first herself, and then others, that the power of these obscure functionaries was much greater than most people imagine. “The further I went into the archive,” she explains in the preface, “the less I was writing about notaries and the more I was writing about writing and power” (p. xii).

Kathryn Burns, an associate professor of history at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, has been going “into the archive” for a number of years now, and these include Spanish as well as Latin American collections. Her main focus of study is colonial Peru, and previous works have included *Colonial Habits: Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peru* (1999), among others. Much of the material covered in her latest work comes from a number of colonial collections in Peruvian archives, but any comprehensive look at Spain’s imperial administration in the Americas would also include a look at the Archivo General de Indias in Seville, and of course Burns does so. Regardless, her focus is less on the archives and more on the men who created their massive documental contents between 1492 and the collapse of Spanish power in the early nineteenth century.

This process, and Burns' analysis, begins when Columbus first arrived at Guanahani in the Caribbean; with him was Rodrigo Descobedo, an *escrivano*, or notary. His task: Draw up the proper paperwork to make legal the taking of the island. This process was repeated over and over again as conquistadors fanned out through the Caribbean and onto the American mainland. In time they arrived in Peru and began notarizing documents there too. In their own way men (and they were all men) such as Descobedo were as critical to Spain's imperial enterprise as were their more famous warrior counterparts. "Notaries were indispensable to possession," she writes, "and possession in a Roman law sense permeated Europeans' worlds" (p. 2). As the Conquest unfolded and formal colonization took root, such notions increasingly permeated the worlds of indigenous people as well.

Into the Archives is a relatively short monograph (151 pages, not including notes, bibliography, and index), but it ranges widely in terms of ideas. Even historians who have little interest in Peru or Latin America more generally will find much to excite them. This book would serve as an ideal graduate school introduction to the art of interpreting documents by examining their producers, and better understanding the functional nature (mostly legal) of all those wonderful old pieces of paper. This is a basic skill in developing the "historians' craft," but Burns' experience of working with documents pertaining to women and indigenous people in Peru has sharpened her awareness of the many pitfalls lurking in the murky labyrinth of Spanish imperial officialdom. This became increasingly true as the Hapsburg "golden age" withered after the 1580s, leading the crown to sell notarial posts to the highest bidder, rather than assign the most trustworthy or best qualified men to administer the colonies. This trend applied to humble notaries as much as to regional administrators of higher status

Swindles and scams ranging from creating outright forgeries to illegally signing blank documents for future use to notarizing recordings of illegal forced statements became widespread. Notaries engaged in all manner of ruses, as did their apprentices—mostly ambitious young men seeking to work various angles—but they did so with the complicity of clients ranging from the most exalted to the most "powerless." Ironically, this corruption actually opened doors of opportunity for "subalterns" negotiating their way through land deals, labor arrangements, and virtually any other type of situation requiring a notarized signature. Burns concludes, "Examined closely, the archives of colonial Cuzco are full of small inconsistencies that hint at a productive tension between *teoría* and *práctica*... The overall point was not transparency" (p.124). Indeed, the point was to conceal and hide the actual nature of all manner of legal transactions.

Every archival document needs to be interrogated by investigators, regardless of what part of the world they were produced in, but colonial Latin America presents special challenges beyond learning to read sixteenth century Castilian. The empire was rife with corruption and participants in this game took special pains to conceal their actions and motives. In this manner, "Document making was like chess: full of gambits, scripted moves, and countermoves. Archives are less like mirrors than like chessboards" (p. 124). The key to deciphering the code

is understanding the complex social rules and unequal power arrangements that characterized the colonial chess game. As such, historians seeking to examine life in the colonial Andean world face a daunting task; however, there are also great rewards awaiting scholars brave enough to face that challenge. “The more we go into the archive and learn about our sources and their subjects,” Burns concludes, “the less any simplistic generalization is possible, and the richer our story lines become” (p. 147).

Although Burns is addressing some challenging theoretical issues, she does so with a simple and elegant style of writing that students in particular will appreciate. She also illustrates her various points with engaging and often dramatic narratives drawn from the archives. Her book also offers insights into the sometimes exasperating bureaucratic nature of many modern Latin American societies, where people (including befuddled tourists) must negotiate their way through day-to-day life. “Documents have certainly changed over the years, and so has the notary’s job...” she writes an epilogue describing her own experiences with notaries in modern Cuzco. “But having official papers is every bit as important to cuzqueños now as it was several centuries ago” (p. 149). Along with “richer story lines” produced by more self aware interpretations of such documents, the promise of a rich mother lode of contemporary documents suggests that future historians of the Andean world will have plenty of material to work with as they try to make sense of rapidly changing situations in places like present-day Peru.

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