

"Haunting the Modern Andean State: Colonial Legacies of Race and Civilization"
Irene Silverblatt, Duke University

Contemporary Andean polities are haunted by colonial legacies. Looking at state-making from the off-centered vantage of developing colonial institutions helps make sense of the trajectory of horrors and irrationalities – as well as idioms of political legitimacy and justice – that have so profoundly marked modern life. European state-making was chained to imperial endeavors and Spanish political ideologies – like those of Spain’s competitors on the Early Modern world stage -- reflect this twinning. My essay explores how colonial apparatuses of statecraft, washed in the dictates of imperial control, made race-thinking – and the imperatives of “civilization” -- part of the body politic.

The framework used here owes much to Hannah Arendt’s account of fascism’s origins. Arendt combed Western history for a precedent -- a form of government which, like Nazism, supported the world-wide dominance of a master race -- that would have eased the way for “civilized” peoples to embrace barbarity. Arendt found it in nineteenth century imperialism and she identified two dimensions of colonial control that would have laid the groundwork for fascism: 1) bureaucratic rule and 2) racial ideologies that turned bureaucrats into members of a superior, white-European caste justified in their dominion across the globe. Arendt’s great fear was that intertwined, race-thinking and bureaucratic rule could unleash “extraordinary power and destruction,” precisely because governance was cloaked in an aura of “rationality” and “civilization”.¹ Arendt’s conception of modernity placed colonialism -- with its dual anchor in

race-thinking and bureaucratic rule -- at the heart of modern experience.

Colonialism's governing principles, however, were not launched by nineteenth century imperialism. From the sixteenth century through the mid seventeenth, Spain was installing cutting-edge bureaucracies and race-thinking designs throughout its widely dispersed colonies. Life in the seventeenth century was different from life in the nineteenth; nonetheless, Arendt's insights are germane and will forge the backdrop to our discussions of colonial state-making in the Andes – along with its persistent haunting. The viceroyalty of Peru will be our focus and the world's most global bureaucracy of the times, the Spanish Inquisition, will be our principal source.

The Andean Setting

To make a Spanish colony out of what had been the Inca empire was an extended process: although begun in the 1530's when Spanish conquistadors, lead by Francisco Pizarro, defeated Cuzco's native forces, it wasn't until the century's end when royal officials – having confronted civil wars, rebellions, and settlers' raw ambition – could successfully root institutions of government. The Crown quickly learned that colony-building pivoted on control over immigrant colonists in equal measure to control over native peoples; and it instituted bureaucracies to curb and “administer” both. Learning from pitfalls on the Peninsula, the Crown consolidated colonial state power in ways that would have been impossible in Europe: strengthening bureaucracies, it gave royal authorities (as opposed to Spanish settlers) jurisdiction over Indian commoners and turned royal bureaucrats into the brokers between Peru's colonizers and colonized natives. The Crown appointed magistrates to supervise Spanish-Indian

relations, designated local headmen to represent native communities, and established courts, armies, district governors, to oversee the rest. Secular arrangements were buttressed by magistrates of the faith, with the Inquisition -- a bureaucracy under the authority of the Crown, not the Church -- overseeing heresies deemed dangerous to the state.

Race-Thinking in Colonial/State-making

Although Spain's imperial enterprise sought the New World's wealth and labor, it was built through construing new social relations and identities, new kinds of human being. The modern state, following Foucault, took "government in the name of truth" as its charge, and one of the most profound social truths for state officials to judge – and to achieve -- was the nature of personhood. Colonialism transformed humanity, making race-thinking into the scaffold of humanness as well as the underlying charter for human control over other human-being.

Royal authorities imposed broad, racialized classifications on imperial subjects. They created two unequal "republics" as the foundation for colonial rule: native Americans and their descendants - regardless of origin, ethnicity, or rank were classed as Indians; descendants of Iberia – regardless of origin, ethnicity, or rank – were classed as privileged Spanish colonists. When Indian populations, decimated by disease and upheaval, could no longer meet labor demands, the Crown turned to slavery, spurring the creation of a third abstract category of government: Africans brought to Peru and their descendants – regardless of origin, ethnicity, or rank – were classed as "negros". This design transformed the colonial enterprise into a racial play of global geopolitics. Turning imperialism into a caste structure, it also attached color to a conjunction of political privilege, place of origin, moral supremacy and economic standing:

Spaniard was glossed as “white”, European, political authority, morally superior, exempt from paying tribute in the colonies; “indio” was glossed as native born, “of color”, political subaltern, morally suspect, obliged to pay tribute to the Crown (except for native nobility); “negro” was glossed as African, black, politically subordinate, morally weak, slave. This was Spanish legal theory’s flat presentation of colonial order – a caste-like ladder of español, indio, negro along with mixtures; and, like most categorical description, it concealed the historical processes – and the conflicts – at its heart.

At the same time that colonizers were civilizing and taxing Indians, enslaving Africans, and distinguishing themselves from the lower orders of Indians and Blacks by calling one another, “Spanish”, investigations into “Spanishness” were taking place on the Peninsula. Administrators in Spain used a particular race-thinking notion to shape and calibrate the “natural order” of political life. They argued that blood carried stains, and that stains could determine character traits, intelligence, political rights and economic possibilities. In Iberia, it was New Christians – converted descendents of Jews and Moors – who carried stained blood. Purity of Blood laws -- measures that restricted political offices and professions to men of untainted, Old Christian stock -- were implemented on the Peninsula before the colonization of the Andes,. Colonizers brought this New Christian curse to the Americas.

With debates spinning about the nature of blood stains -- Were they indelible? Could baptism or accomplishments override them? Could New Christians of Jewish descent ever lose their stain? -- authorities in the Americas were vexed by such blood-related questions as: were all New Christians alike? Was the blood stain of Europe’s New Christians the same as the blood

stain of the New World's New Christians (i.e. Indians or Blacks)? And then, were the stains of America's newly converted – Indian and Black -- equal? These debates, on both sides of the Atlantic, nurtured one characteristic of “authentic” “Spanishness: whether in the context of colony or the context of “Europe”, “true” Spanish blood was always pure, untainted by New Christian or Black/Indian mixtures. In this configuration, not only was the Spanish caste racialized; so was its contemporary partner – the potential Spanish nation.

These two, intermeshed paradigms framed the new categories of humanness -- the new categories of political subjection -- that early state-making and colonialism instantiated. Their entanglements also shadow contemporary confusions: of “race” with “nation”, of “nation” with religion, of religion with ancestry, of ancestry with culture and of culture with economic aptitude, political loyalty and moral pre-eminence.

Irrationalities, Confusions and the Languages of Legitimacy

One of the Lima Inquisition's most important functions was to clarify cultural blame: specify who, among the Viceroyalty's inhabitants, held contrary beliefs or engaged in life practices that were perceived to threaten the colonial state. In the Andes, where confusions of race-thinking merged with imperatives of religion and politics, accusations could take the form of breath-taking conspiracies with breath-taking and tragic consequences. Here we touch on three intertwined examples – the “Jewish/mercantilism” problem, the “woman/withcraft” problem, and the “Indian” problem. As we'll see, magistrates inevitably brought race-thinking to bear on their judgments just as they inevitably appealed to reasons of state to justify them. We will also see that state bureaucrats did not have the only word on race-thinking and its meanings.

In 1639 Lima witnessed a Gran Auto-de-Fe, a public ceremony of judgment. Manuel Bautista Perez, convicted of secretly practicing Judaism, was burned at the stake. The day after, Ana Maria de Contreras was whipped and shorn for practicing witchcraft. Manuel Bautista Perez and Ana Maria de Contreras had something surprising in common: both were accused by Inquisitors of having ties to Peru's recalcitrant Indians.

The 1639 auto, notorious as the tableau for the punishment of the "great conspiracy" of hidden Jews, was the bloodiest in Lima's inquisitorial history. Perez was one of eleven executed for crimes associated with Judaising; another 62 admitted guilt and were penanced. Inquisitors justified their actions to the Suprema in Madrid by appealing to the dangers New Christians posed, not only to the ethical foundation of the colony, but to its very political security. Most Inquisitors were dubious about the commitment of New Christians to Spain or to Catholicism – loyalty, after all, was in the blood. Distrust, however, turned into alarm when Peruvian magistrates became convinced that "hidden Jews" had not only established ties with the Dutch enemy, but with "indios" and "negros". The remarkable transformations in political economy – the growth of merchant capital and the growth of colonialism – nurtured the tribunal's wildest fantasies of New Christian conspirators at the center of a great plot of oppressed, colonial malcontents (Indians and Blacks) and foreign (Dutch) usurpers.

Debates over the character of New Christians were debates that fused questions regarding Spain's emerging sense of nation with the new, global, colonial order. The supporters of purity of blood laws believed that religious conversion could not erase the stains of a heretical religious past, and Inquisitors who arrested New Christians on the assumption they were insidious, Jewish

merchants were making the case for a “racially”-pure Spanish nation and for a “racially”-pure definition of “Spanishness”. Manuel Bautista Perez, a renowned and powerful merchant sought out by Lima’s elite, surely felt that “full-Spanish” status was his due. Of course, Perez believed in and defended the legitimacy of a political structure that enslaved blacks and coerced Indian labor; but, he also believed in the right of good Christian subjects, regardless of ancestry, to be justly recognized for their contributions to nation/empire and church. It was in this regard that he challenged Castile’s racial definition of religion and of Spanishness.

Magistrates pursuing the “great conspiracy” were appalled by another failing running deep in the Viceregal character: the attraction to native life. Writing to the Supreme Council in Madrid, Juan de Manozca, the Inquisitor who oversaw the 1639 auto, bemoaned the colony's abysmal lack of faith. He assessed Peru as a degraded country and, in his letter, blamed Peru’s degradation on the ubiquity of witches, nearly always women, who were immersed in the customs and knowledge of the colony's uncivilized natives. Things Indian were becoming increasingly prominent in the repertoire of “Spanish”, “Black” (free and slave), “mulata”, “mestiza”, and “samba” witches – to Manozca’s chagrin . By the time Ana Maria de Contreras (the accused witch sharing the scaffold with Manuel Bautista Perez) was penanced, even the Inca was said to make an appearance in dreams and spells.

The fears inspired by “witches” who worshiped the Inca and by New Christian merchants who carried on with “indios” and “negros” were elaborated at the same time that some of Peru’s native peoples, calling themselves “Indian”, were suspected of abandoning Catholicism for ancestral idolatries. We must keep in mind that before the Spanish conquest, Andeans did not

conceive of themselves as Indian; and, except for Cuzquenans, neither did they conceive of themselves as Inca descendents. Now some self-proclaimed “Indians”, whose ancestors most likely fought against Inca dominance, were calling on the Inca to help right the wrongs of a colonial world run amok. These natives, from Peru’s central sierra, deliberately rejected Spanish religion and became “Indian”– that is, their version of Indian. It appears that colonialism’s cultural politics provided an idiom of nativist protest that was captured by Indian and non-Indian alike.

This was the stuff of conspiracy: the “witch-woman problem”, “Jewish problem”, and “Indian problem” – were mutually reinforcing, swelling authorities’ anxieties over the brittleness of the social and political fabric - the race-thinking cultural hierarchy - of the Spanish colonial state. Colonial rule, inscribed in racialized terms and through racialized -cultural hierarchies, was menaced, or so the Inquisitors thought, by witchcraft ideologies and New Christian conspiracies that reached into the heart of imperial cultural politics. In turn, the imagined threats of colonial witchcraft and of New Christian sabotage swelled as they absorbed fears surrounding native subversions, the allegiances of slaves, and the power of foreign enemies. Peru’s inquisitors intertwined stereotypes of New Christians, “indios”, “negros”, and women as part of an etiology of fear and blame. This etiology was built on a racialized (and gendered) vision that confused nationalist sentiments, religion, and the caste-categories of colonial rule. Racialized ways of being in and thinking the world penetrated the Colonial Andes and, in different ways, also shaped ideologies that challenged Spanish colonial rule, cried out against Spanish legitimacy, and presented a contrasting vision of political morality.

Securing European state-making to its moorings in global expansion helps explain the irrationalities that have accompanied the development of the modern age -- irrationalities made all the more dangerous by their coating in the rhetoric of civilization, the rhetoric of reason, and the rhetoric of reasons of state. Hannah Arendt believed that the modern, colonial world was the precedent for the savagery of the twentieth century. How, then, does Spanish colonialism haunt our modern world – including, of course, our modern world in the Andes.

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