

ETHNOHISTORIANS AND
ANDEAN ETHNOHISTORY:
A Difficult Task, A Heterodox Discipline

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LA ORGANIZACIÓN ECONÓMICA DEL ESTADO INCA. By JOHN V. MURRA.
(Mexico: Siglo XXI Editores, 1978. Pp. 270.)

FORMACIONES ECONÓMICAS Y POLÍTICAS DEL MUNDO ANDINO. By
JOHN V. MURRA. (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1975. Pp. 339.)

ETNIA Y SOCIEDAD: COSTA PERUANA PREHISPANICA. By MARIA ROST-
WOROWSKI DE DIEZ CANSECO. (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos,
1977. Pp. 293.)

SEÑORÍOS INDÍGENAS DE LIMA Y CANTA. By MARIA ROSTWOROWSKI DE
DIEZ CANSECO. (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, 1978. Pp. 280.)

Introduction

The books reviewed here are examples of one of the most productive branches of American historiography: the history of peoples without a written language. The development of ethnohistory was slow until the 1960s, when Mexican and Andean historians discovered its methodological possibilities and applied them to the study of the voluminous material in existing archives. Today, works in this field constitute one of the most prolific lines of contemporary American studies. This does not mean, however, that there is broad consensus among specialists. On the contrary, it would seem that the vagueness of the original definition of the field served as a rather elastic boundary for a multitude of uneven efforts at coming closer to a knowledge of our indigenous past. But blame should not be placed on individual authors who have had to work within the double limitation of handling material as yet unclarified by theoretical discussion and dealing with a subject that reflects cultural and political biases.

The sixteenth century covers broadly the most important period in Latin American history: during this time arose native kingdoms and empires that not only showed great material achievements but also demonstrated their ability to create autonomous and self-sufficient civilizations whose ideals persisted long after the fall of their political forms; this same century also witnessed the faith and daring of the Spanish and

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Portuguese who, both privately and by royal commission, had formed one of the most important European colonial systems.

Owing to its magnitude and complexity, the colonial process is difficult for researchers to study. First, the Aztecs, Incas, Chibchas, etc. were at different points in their cultural development. If they later appear uniform, it is because the colonial state reduced the diversity of the native world to a common factor. In some regions, the cultural differences of the natives (that is, the impossibility of making them a part of the Spanish productive apparatus) resulted in their almost immediate disappearance; in other places, the native government machinery was productive enough to satisfy its new masters and to save, for a time, a remnant of the indigenous society, which served as a bridge to the new society that was being created.

The Europeans undertook to reduce this process to a logic and a code so that it could be administered. However, the wars of the conquest were followed by wars among the conquistadors; thus, it took more than fifty years, in the case of the Andes, to begin an evaluation of resources and population, both of which had diminished considerably by that time. The documents reflect these uncertainties and make it difficult to trace and understand the lives and institutions of the first Europeans. The native people, for their part, are even less visible in the documents, even though the vast majority of their population and institutions were involved in the same process.

“Scarce documentary visibility” is a euphemistic approach to the central theme of this review. While documentation on the Spanish is incomplete, that on the natives presents a series of special difficulties. To begin with, the natives themselves did not write them; when the curiosity of a soldier or the zeal of a priest obliged the natives to reconstruct their past, the oral account was written down from a European perspective. This alone—writing down oral accounts in terms of European history—produced a bias in the sources that we use today. The problem transcends the techniques of storing and conserving the past. It is not a question of (for example) the Incas and Chibchas being without a written language, but that their conceptualization of the past and of the functions of historical accounts differed greatly from the European.

In the Andean situation, the lack of a written language, as far as we know, and the use of a numerical system that is not yet fully understood represent important barriers to understanding the culture of the Incas and their ancestors. But this is only the tip of the iceberg. The comprehension of the past and the lineal interpretation of Christian history that the Spanish brought with them were totally foreign to a farming society with a low level of urbanization and a highly stratified social structure, where the concept of time was more closely linked to natural cycles than to historical events.

The accounts of Inca bureaucrats, and bilingual natives in general, are not history in the European sense of the word. Rather, they are formal (sacred) texts in which a more or less closed version is given of a unique event, valid for the past, the present, and the future. There is evidence that into this text the names of kings, functionaries, and important ecclesiastics, citizens, and soldiers were inserted or deleted as the political moment called for, the accounts thus changing as regards the actors but fixed as regards their actions and context.

Given these circumstances, how can we arrive at an understanding of the pre-Columbian past? First, documents are not the only source. The ruins and artifacts as well as the contemporary native populations offer material that can be analyzed in order to understand the past. Archaeology today emphasizes the use of physical remains to reconstruct social and economic structures. Indeed, it is possible that many monuments were made with the express intention of bearing witness to their epochs. And, in the same way, native populations, in order to maintain and reconstruct their identities, conserve and revitalize responses that are similar to those they gave centuries ago.

But neither archaeology nor ethnology eliminates the need to use historical documents; the problem, a methodological one, is *how* to use them. Hardly had any perspective been achieved (either by geographical distance or by the passage of time) when European historians were placing in their texts material from the chroniclers. More than one wrote parallel accounts, trying to find chronological correspondences between the then recently reconstructed "history" of the Incas and the important events of European history. A precise date was given to each Inca reign in order to match it with a king from across the ocean. This concept gave a specific place to Andean (and American) events in the context of European history. And it is well to make note of this because, off and on, this approach has been abandoned in favor of European-centered, if not racist, ideologies. In any case, through the 1940s, the Indianist approach continued to be dominant, with more or less refinement. As such, the Andean section of the 1946 edition of the *Handbook of South American Indians* shows a perceptible change in this orientation, incorporating research efforts made from the beginning of the century that first manifested in a theoretically significant way in the literature of the *indigenista* movement.

The key to transcending the limitations of the written sources lay in rereading the chronicles while keeping in mind that they were oral sources and that the text was created by a society whose concept of time differed from the Western one. This implied an indirect approach to the written source, treating it as an anthropological informant and recognizing that its explicit historical objectives were false ones. It is not surprising, then, that anthropologists were the prime movers behind this new

perspective. As such, instead of precise dates and places or political events of real or supposed importance, the new work was directed toward a search for social structures and patterns of behavior, finding in the halting, difficult to translate narratives the possibility of reconstructing segments of Andean life that had been given up for lost. As a consequence, our judgment of the value of different sources has been inverted: beautifully written and often-reprinted histories are found to be prejudiced and ignorant when judged by this new standard, while an almost bilingual text, written by a poorly educated native, became one of the most valuable sources (I refer, of course, to the *New Chronicle and Good Government* of Guaman Poma).

But the anthropological approach did not only turn to known sources. In addition to the chronicles, the colonial bureaucracy had accumulated three centuries of documentation necessary for the functioning of the colonial government. Naturally, by comparison with the customary eloquence of the chroniclers—many renowned in the world of letters—the reports of visitors, the judgments of magistrates, the registrations of baptisms, etc. are almost unreadable. But the dryness of the texts was more than compensated for by the fact that they contained the necessary information to reconstruct pre-Columbian society and history during the colonial period. Thus, specialists developed a lively interest in the publication of documents whose importance was not always apparent given the theoretical weaknesses with which the discipline of ethnohistory began. This difficulty was aggravated by disparate standards in the selection of materials, a function of the numerous interests that kept adding themselves to a field with no apparent boundaries. These ranged from those who attempted to reconstruct the social structure on the basis of the Andean zodiac to those who searched for the lost (and several times discovered) city of Vilcabamba. In each case, the documents selected were crucial to their users but of limited use to other specialists. Finally, loyal to their anthropological roots, ethnohistorians have used contemporary materials to illuminate their comprehension of the past. To the texts of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries they have added oral accounts of economics, social organization, and even dreams, taken from the natives. As may be imagined, this considerably enlarged the number of supposed ethnohistorians and made the limits of the discipline even vaguer.

The Books Reviewed

The four books under review have the advantage of including the greater part of their authors' work up to the present. Murra and Rostworowski describe themselves as ethnohistorians and are so considered in academic circles. Their standing in scientific circles is of the first order.

La organización económica del estado Inca is Murra's 1955 doctoral dissertation from the University of Chicago. It is important to note that the judgments made and the state of the research referred to correspond to that date. The text had already circulated widely in academic circles through the original microfilm version. The modern edition does not update the original thesis but merely adds a short introduction that advises the reader of its nature and points out that the material dates from 1955.

Murra studies the organization of the economy under the Inca state. Although agriculture, land ownership, herding, and textiles are analyzed, there is no attempt to offer a detailed account of the economic structure of the Tawantinsuyu, as these themes really serve to exemplify the theoretical argument, postulated later in the book, of the passing from a communal to a state economy. Nevertheless, Murra is very clear in his ethnological focus and his emphasis on the relationship of man to each of these sectors. Thus, the chapter on "Agriculture" is dedicated to understanding the function of the Andean crops in the society which discovered and domesticated them. Starting with a solid presentation of the ecology of this part of the continent, Murra concentrates on discovering the way in which crops were perceived and used, always emphasizing, in a kind of counterpoint, the functions they fulfilled in the communities and how these functions were reinforced, enlarged, or changed when the crops became objects of imperial concern. He also considers the ritual functions of various plants, on the basis of the timing of their domestication and the sex of those charged with cultivating them.

The chapter on "Land Holding" concentrates on the possession and use of cultivable land and entails a discussion of how the authority assigned and took away holdings and decided their size and distribution. Here he touches on the topic of the political jurisdictions of the local *curacas* (chiefs) and Incas, and discusses the division into the lands of the Sun, the lands of the king, and the lands of the community, attempting to specify the limits and boundaries of commands and authorities.

The next two chapters were later modified and appeared as articles when more complete information became available ("Textiles" in 1958, "Herds" in 1964). In the 1955 version, Murra sought to describe both the individuals who had access to property and the means by which it was obtained. From this perspective, the opportunities of the *hatun runa* (country people), the *curacas*, the state officials, and the nobility of Cuzco are shown and measured. In the chapter on textiles, this treatment is especially interesting since Murra interprets work done there as activities apart from the ceremonial context in which they had always been considered.

In the second part of the book, Murra acknowledges his theoretic-

cal debt to Karl Polanyi and the importance to his studies of research being carried out in Africa. The latter led him to contrast Andean tribal structures (Murra called them *etnías* to avoid a word laden with stereotyped significances) with those of African kingdoms. The contrapuntal use of both cases made evident certain important observations that later served to support a more general theoretical analysis. It is here that the Tawantinsuyu is characterized as a redistributive state. That is to say, from the system of reciprocity that linked the Andean communities, the Inca state (and probably the political entities that preceded it) formed an economic system that reserved for itself the right to the surpluses generated, thus assuring the right to distribute them in a way that made possible its bureaucratic functioning and permitted the distribution of the gifts and prizes with which it consolidated the loyalties of the villages and their leaders.

In "Revolving Loans and State Income," Murra distinguishes the drafts of service that the communities gave to their local chief from those that the state demanded of them. Here he outlines with care the rotating communal tasks in which the whole village had to participate (the agricultural *mita*, for example) and those that the artisans carried out, emphasizing the seasonal character of the communal labors and the different space and time constraints imposed by the tasks of the specialized workers. He also presents some preliminary ideas on the *yanas*, who were taken from their communities to render personal services as the governing sector needed them.

Murra restudies, in "Distribution of the Surplus," one of the most widespread stereotypes in the chronicles: the "generosity" of the state. In addition to its role as "protector," usurping local and regional initiative, the government stimulated, administered, and stored the surpluses of a considerable population. This leads Murra to ask what the reasons were for such accumulation. He answers the question by means of a quotation from Gluckman alongside one from the chronicler Martín de Murúa:

In primitive economies the individual with much property is able to do little with it for his own profit: he has no way of buying luxury items, capital does not pay interest, and the commercial cycle is limited. Thus the man of wealth (and this refers above all to the nobility) is obliged to destroy his property, as was done on the Northwest coast of Canada, or share it with others, as was done in Africa. Thus the king shared a great part of the wealth which he acquired. . . . (Gluckman 1943, pp. 75–76)

To this Murra adds the following text from the chronicle:

These four nobles and the other local chiefs and leaders from all parts of the kingdom had much riches to give him . . . great presents . . . and the king took it all and made great gifts to each according to his rank and state, giving shirts . . . and bracelets and crowns . . . and turquoise necklaces and beads of colored "chaquira" which the Guancavelica Indians gave him . . . and to some of the

chiefs he gave permission to be carried in litters . . . and to others in hammocks . . . and he gave them herding and farming rights . . . and to others he gave women, and this does not include all the riches he distributed at the appropriate festivals. (Murúa 1590, 1. III chap. 69; 1946, pp. 339–40)

When he characterized the economic system as redistributive (chap. 7, “Exchange and Barter”) Murra underplayed the function of commerce, assigning to the state the role of organizer of the exchange of goods. Years later, documentary evidence appeared that showed the existence of specialized merchants in Chinchá; this weakened Murra’s arguments regarding trade, but did not affect the general foundation of his work. It also must be said that the written sources available in 1955 concerning commercial traffic were very contradictory and, except for the famous reference to the logging of balsa wood, few direct references existed. This explains why Murra exhausts the topic in a few pages and then concentrates on the possible existence of markets and on the peripheral aspects of commerce (tolls, carriers, etc.), which he extracts with great effort from extremely difficult material.

The book ends with a description of the economic system as a whole, as it functioned around the time of contact, specifying how those individuals who were not subject to rotating labor drafts (like the *ayllu*) related to that system. This chapter is devoted to the artisans, the *aqlla*, *yana*, and *mitima*, who are often mentioned in the sources. The nature of their activities transcended the agrarian rhythm of the Andean economy and appears—especially in the three last-mentioned cases—to be more closely linked with the state apparatus than with the traditional community.

Evidently, the artisans (potters, goldsmiths, etc.), like the specialized technicians (account-keepers, carriers, etc.), had to vary the rhythm of their production in accordance with royal needs, which assigned them to precise positions within the social structure of the Tawantinsuyu. There is little information on the passage from self-sufficient countryman, performing an array of necessary tasks (making his own farming tools, clothing, etc.) to specialist recruited by the state to make only certain artifacts. By the same token, at the other extreme of the professional ladder, we also know little about the “educated class” in the Tawantinsuyu, including those who directed architectural projects, prepared battle plans, or organized royal rituals.

The chronicles not only rarely differentiate among the servants but offer conflicting versions on their functions. Of the three, Murra pays more attention to the *yana*, because their existence indicates a forward step in the economic structure. For even if artisans, *mitimas* and *aqllas* escaped from the rotating system of work organization, they were still, by the nature of their labors, complementary to it. However, having classified *yanas* as personal servants (a gift to which land had to

be added) of a privileged group of the nobility, Murra alerts us to the possible growth of a "private sector" that could have transformed the dynamics of the Tawantinsuyu had everything not been interrupted in 1532. This topic, with which the book concludes, was taken up again by Murra in 1965, after the publication of the *Visita hecha a la provincia de Chuquito* (Diez de San Miguel, Lima, 1964) enabled him to work with factual information referring to a specific area.

It is difficult to evaluate a book whose publication was delayed twenty-two years, but the book stands high. The evidence on many subjects is still valuable and the questions asked are still valid, perhaps because the field lacks scholars as passionate as Murra. In the book of his collected articles, the same subjects appear in a more refined form, but it should be remembered that they are appendices to a work whose impact has transcended the difficulties of consulting an unpublished volume and whose working hypotheses, supported by the magnificent expository ability of its author, is today an obligatory starting point for any student of the Incas.

Formaciones económicas y políticas del mundo andino contains twelve articles written between 1958 and 1973; as a result, the book is of uneven quality, with solid, well-known studies side by side with jottings or circumstantial notes. Setting the latter aside, we will concentrate on the major works, especially those written after 1965, which are based on new documentation that Murra himself helped to publish and disseminate: the visitas to Huanuco and Chuquito.

"The Vertical Control of a Maximum of Ecological Levels in Andean Societies" presents the hypothesis that Andean society, in response to its geographical environment, had established an economy based on the assumption that natural resources would vary in accordance with altitude. This variability, which corresponded to the rugged nature of the Andean landscape, caused the inhabitants to seek access to all of the ecological niches, which, in combination, produced the goods they needed. From this perspective, notions of habitat, cultivated lands, property limits, family, etc. would differ radically from the European model, based on ecological assumptions and a juridical tradition that is totally foreign. The community would use the heights (4,000 meters) to pasture llamas, areas 1,000 meters below this for the cultivation of corn, and areas on the slopes of the Andes for growing cotton and planting fruit trees. This meant that, either permanently or periodically, part of the community had to occupy each of these zones. Obviously, this system becomes complicated if, instead of the hypothetical example of a single community, we have complex societies that consisted of one or two hundred of these communities. This is probably what happened in the kingdoms or tribal confederations of the Andes, where the need to exploit resources became intense, thus increasing the number of con-

trolled niches, the distance from the center of power, and the number of people involved. Finally, the whole system had to be modified in the case of a supraregional entity such as the Tawantinsuyo, in which ecological characteristics were secondary to imperial interests. At the hands of its governors, a new geopolitic had to be orchestrated, rearranging the standards of the communities and states under the influence of Cuzco.

As an example of this theory, Murra compares political entities of different levels of complexity (the tribes of the central valleys of the highlands and the kingdom of Chimor on the coast) and adds a forest example as a “negative case,” or, rather, to serve as an example of the peripheral nucleus (state-owned farms, Murra says) of what could have been another island in the “archipelago” created by the Cuzco government. Obviously, the mountain examples agree with the hypothesis of verticality, while the “kingdoms” of Collique and Chimor, says Murra, lack the necessary documentation to correspond adequately to the model even though they offer sufficient indications of its validity.

Murra, as noted above, was able to organize his hypothesis thanks to the new approach to documentation (which he himself spearheaded), which led to the publication of Spanish bureaucratic documents that had been ignored in previous bibliographies. From these documents observations can be made on subjects ranging from aspects of Inca provincial life to the characteristics of regional and local confederations and communities whose ethnic identity was still visible when the Europeans arrived. In this sense, works such as Murra’s are links in a chain of academic activities that have had diverse effects on the social sciences; that is to say, besides its validity, this study encouraged the publication of sources that have enriched the study of pre-European societies.

“Traditional Ethnic Authorities in Alto Huallaga” is based on the *visita* that contains documents from the years 1532 and 1549 about the area that is today in the department of Huanuco. By working in a small area where he has information from two chronological periods he is able to verify the functioning of the systems of organization and political control. The result is a look at these institutions not from the imperial viewpoint but from a provincial perspective. We can see specific details of the cogovernment of the curacas of Huanuco, their access to the services of the people who were under their rule, as well as their relationship with the Inca government of the province. Also interesting is the decentralized character of the Inca “provinces,” which often ignored the opinion from Cuzco—just the opposite of the impression given by the traditional bibliography.

The chapter ends with a short discussion of Andean dual division. The organization of Andean communities was also expressed in

territorial terms, in such a manner that each half had its own hierarchy. This system had political implications in that the authorities of the superior "half" were usually the authorities of the whole community. In the case described by Murra, the Andean dual division is described as an *ichoq-allauqa* (left-right) pattern, as was common in the central and northern areas of the Peruvian mountains, although in the south the *hanan-hurin* (above-below) system was used, which later became generalized because it was that of the imperial site.

"An Aymara Kingdom in 1567" describes the peculiar situation of an area that, shortly after the conquest, was—land, villages, and all—"given into the hands of his majesty"; in other words, excluded from the land grant system and designated as tribute for the Spanish king. This situation probably delayed the decomposition of the Lupaqa kingdom so that the report of Diez de San Miguel was able to show the existence of considerable fragments of pre-European society. Moreover, the testimony during the visita of leaders of very different ages provides a retrospective vision of the process of disarticulation from the time of the conquest until the year of the visit.

"The Lupaqa ecosystem was an archipelago which included, besides the nucleus which surrounded Chuquito, a series of remote valleys planted with corn and cotton, forests and coca. . . . Political units (like Lupaqa) enlarged this idea of 'verticality' to include desirable territory as far away from Lake Titicaca as the coast from Ilo to Arica and the tropical jungles of Larecaxa and Capinota on the far side of Cochabamba" (p. 205). In this way, the Lupaqa enlarged their economic possibilities, which were already ample because their home territory was in one of the important livestock centers and was endowed with vegetation, the domestication of which gave them great experience in the control of natural resources.

From his account of the wealth of the Lupaqa chiefs, Murra introduces his second theme: the network of reciprocity that linked the native authorities with their subjects. In doing so he describes the resources to which the nobles of the region had access (information that, fortunately, is provided by the visita) and tries to determine the mechanisms used to correct them. He then discusses the changes introduced by colonial taxation, when the curacas (*mallku* in Aymara) had to demand from their people sufficient goods to satisfy Spanish business interests and the clergy as well as the royal tribute. The conflict caused by this situation clarifies the limits of the mechanism of reciprocity which came to an end when the colonial system made the Andean political structures superfluous.

This review would be incomplete without mentioning Murra's last article. "Research in Andean Ethnohistory and Its Future Possibilities" is an account of research until 1970 and some suggestions for topics

to be studied. This was no easy task, and few could have written such a complete and concise synthesis. Sources, authors, and research in progress are mentioned in detail but Murra does not—and has no reason to—elaborate on the discipline itself. He speaks of “ethnohistory as a collaboration of the two disciplines” (p. 287); lamenting the diminished interchange among specialists in the social sciences, he states that “ethnohistory could offer a framework, not to eliminate difficulties but to state priorities. . . . Equidistant between archaeology and ethnology, recognized as the indispensable ally of both, the documents which deal with the Andean world open perspectives of collaboration which no procedure or method by itself can hope to reach” (p. 312).

In contrast to Murra is an author whose work is *increscendo* with publications since 1953. Maria Rostworowski is the most productive ethnohistorian in Peru. Her interest in the past was kindled by the scholar Raúl Porras, and although she has remained at the margin of the university world, her influence on Peruvian anthropology and history is unquestioned.

Etnia y sociedad is a collection of articles published in scholarly journals between 1970 and 1973. The book is divided into six chapters, three of which refer to ethnic groups identified by means of social character and productive activity (tribes of Chillón, merchants of Chincha, nobility of Ichma), and three of which deal with various topics (coca plantations, the ruins of Con Con, and fishermen, artisans, and merchants) that have in common their location on the Peruvian coast.

In a very brief introduction, Rostworowski mentions the need to study the coast in order to counterbalance a bibliography heavily loaded in favor of the mountain regions, and especially the Incas of Cuzco. Moreover, she tries to follow those lines of analysis that, being specific to this coastal region (where the social and political formulae of the Incas and of students of the Incas are not always valid), can make our vision of the Andean past more complete. Rostworowski sketches an outline of the coastal ecology, emphasizing the role of the sea in creating an environment that was reflected in the culture of the coastal villages. And to the Pacific Ocean must be added the desert nature of the coast, where life depends on the rivers coming from the heights of the Andes and crossing the coastal area at intervals on their way to the sea.

Rostworowski accepts Murra's theories for the highlands, but suggests that in coastal areas the social organization had a much more marked division of labor. Commerce had replaced the multiethnic enclaves, leading to a work force of specialists far different from the multi-functional peasants of the highlands. She proposes that this coastal pattern predominated during the prehistoric periods labeled “inter-

mediate" by John Rowe, to distinguish them from the "horizon" periods during which the highlands were supreme.

The first chapter, "The Tribes of the Valley of Chillón," is a short monograph on the kingdom of Collique (which Rostworowski, using the colonial name, refers to as a *señorio*), the tribes of Guancayo, and the "band" of the Yauyos. These three groups were located on the central Peruvian coast, although not directly on the ocean, the resources of which were exploited only by Collique. The Guancayo, living near the heights of the Chillón River, seem to have been subordinate to Collique, while the Yauyos, coming from the heights of the Cañete River, seem to have been a confederation that spread northward from its original territory by taking from the kingdom of Collique the mountain fringe that had been theirs.

Rostworowski's work, drawing mainly on national and Spanish archives, offers in an organized fashion information that had previously been fragmentary. But far from writing a mere description of pre-European tribal organizations, she uses the material to reconstruct the way in which the coastal system functioned. Her narrative, which covers the pre-Incan through postcontact periods, is full of illustrations of how life probably was in those precariously autonomous villages, joined with their neighbors in war and intermittent alliances. She discusses the changes brought by the arrival of troops from Cuzco—the imperial peace changed the political panorama of the area and caused the eventual domination of the coastal kingdom by the Yauyos—and the consequent appearance of social segments and resources whose activity and production were destined for the Incas. She also documents the fate of these tribes who saw in colonial rule and the arrival of the Europeans a change in the balance of power that caused them—the author says—to support enthusiastically the newcomers.

Finally, this chapter permits us to make two additional observations. The first, which might be called methodological, refers to the author's sources, which complemented the archival work. I refer to the discoveries by Rostworowski of ruins that she then used to locate the ethnic groups and establish their political and cultural limits. It is also noteworthy that many of the facts came from the texts collected by Francisco de Avila, one of the most notable persecutors of native sanctuaries and priests. During his administration, Avila collected a "regional bible" of sacred stories (like the *Chilan Balan* or the *Popol Vuh*), which contains the beliefs of the peoples of the central Western Andes. Rostworowski interprets the struggles of the gods as divine representations of the human wars for the control of various resources in which both victory and defeat are manifested in the fate of the divinities portrayed in the sacred text. The second observation refers to the continu-

ous mountain-coast comparison, which permits a comparative view of Murra's hypotheses using material from a different habitat (see, for example, pp. 69, 71, 74, 89).

"Coastal Fishermen, Artisans, and Merchants in Pre-Hispanic Peru" summarizes the information and ideas mentioned in the preceding chapters of her book. The most explicit theme of the work, and the central argument of this chapter, is the concept of "specialized labor," which, according to the author, predominated in the coastal regions. This had important effects on the lifestyle of the peoples of the coast: from the need for the active interchange of products at all levels to the ranking of the inhabitants according to the type of specialized labor they performed. More than people, whole tribes specialized as fishermen, potters, brewers. The volume of their activity, the demand for their product, its reputation at both local and interregional levels, etc. gave the group of artisans or specialists its position in society as a whole. For example, the documents indicate that the fishermen, once their task was done, enjoyed a considerable amount of free time and that the merchants were able to accumulate so much wealth that they were able to maintain their leading role even after the Inca conquest.

From the Inca point of view the hierarchies and specialized labor of the coast posed problems for the administrators of the Tawantinsuyu. Rostworowski quotes Murra (pp. 248, 697) noting, in agreement with him, that before obtaining access to the goods of their subjects the Incas obtained "a loan of human energy" from them through the mita. This, which is actually the objectification of the hypothesis of reciprocity and redistribution, had to be reformulated when the empire dealt with populations whose contributions were based on other principles. The result was that, once the hostilities of the first contact had passed, the fishermen, merchants, and artisans paid tribute to Cuzco in accordance with their own system of production. Their specialized work was exempted from the mita, not as a favored treatment, but because the Incas understood the circumstances that would make them most productive. Thus, for example, since the fishermen lacked cultivated land, knew nothing of agriculture, and were highly specialized in their own work, it would have been counterproductive to force them to labor on the lands of the Incas. In any case, if there were arable land or natural products of the coast unknown to the natives, the Tawantinsuyu could mobilize *mitimaes* (forced colonists) to have access to these resources.

This review oversimplifies the complexity of the problems and the various solutions that were tried successively and simultaneously. For example, whatever the positions of specialists within the Inca structure, they did not necessarily coincide with positions held in the region of origin. This favored certain activities to such a point that, on the one hand, entire groups could be privileged to an unusual degree (for in-

stance, the merchants of Chincha) while, on the other, more than one sector of the population disappeared, along with the skills that previously sustained them.

Rostworowski documents her arguments by referring to artisans (potters, silversmiths, painters, brewers, saltmakers) and merchants. In so doing, she publishes for the first time detailed archival material on commercial activities. The merchants of the valley of Chincha, the subjects of this documentation, reestablish the role of commercial activities under the imperial government. The fact that the litter of the Chincha chief was the only one to accompany the Inca when he was captured by Pizarro lends credence to Rostworowski when she proposes a new perspective for the analysis of the Tawantinsuyu through a reconstruction of the coastal villages.

Señoríos indígenas de Lima y Canta is dedicated exclusively to the historical reconstruction of the indigenous groups of the Yauyos, Lima, Huaura, and Canta, concentrating on the period from just before the Inca conquest to just after the Spanish conquest. The first part of the book treats the three former groups, while the second is devoted to the Canta. This section also contains transcripts of the supporting documents.

The concept of *behetrías* is commonplace in Peruvian historiography although its application has been burdened with a stereotyped error that came more from its context than from its etymology. The Inca Garcilazo de la Vega, who is mainly responsible for the diffusion of the term, used “*behetría*” to contrast it with the Inca empire, insinuating—by implication and with the skill of his pen—that he was comparing order and chaos, civilization and savagery, etc. Thus, these organizations that preceded the Incas, which they, presumably, had come to educate, were considered *behetrías*. However, Rostworowski gives the original significance of the word (and which was, no doubt, in the minds of the chroniclers—including Garcilazo, who can’t be held responsible for later interpretations of his work) as “a village whose neighbors, being absolute lords over them, could receive whomever they liked, and was most profitable for them, as chief” (p. 45).

The recovery of this original concept is necessary for the study of the villages to which it was applied. For instance, in the Rimac Valley there were many ethnic groups divided into numerous aggregations that were dependent on each other and in different levels of subordination. An important role in this balance of power was played by control of the water supply. (The central coast of Peru is almost rainless, which makes the irrigation canals vitally important.) The minor groups depended on irrigation ditches that the more powerful chiefs allowed them to run from the main channels or from the river bank, which they controlled. When the Incas arrived, they altered the intertribal play for power, adapting the land and people to a system of organization com-

patible with their own interests. In accordance with this, they installed Inca chiefs and rearranged the control of land (and water) and men.

It is interesting to note that Taulichusco, the "chief and principal lord of Lima" was a yana of the wife of the Inca Guaina Capac. The appearance of yanás as governors seems surprising, because students of Peruvian history (until the middle of the 1960s) tended to emphasize the servile position of the yanás. Rostworowski suggests that "it is possible that these chiefs of the 'yana' class were under the direct orders of the Inca, but served to extricate him from the complicated reciprocities which united the great nobles with those of lesser rank."

The second part of this book is dedicated to the "kingdom" of Canta. In reality, this consisted of eight *ayllus* that were located ladderwise, descending from the mountainsides of the valley of the Chillón to the coastal plain below. *Ayllus* are described in detail, using the material provided by the two *visitas* (1549 and 1553) that not only complement each other in terms of information but allow us to see the changes that took place in this crucial period. However, the material poses almost more questions than it answers. For example, Rostworowski notes the existence of sixteen seasonal villages, which were used in rotation according to the specific work done in each—e.g., weaving was done in one and in another ceramics; a third, high on the mountain, was where the shepherds came together for the shearing; others were for the manufacture of shoes or for hunting and birding. The documentary evidence does not, however, enable us to understand the reason for so many "villages" nor the logic behind them. Rostworowski supposes that "this type of system must have occurred when the ecological levels were only a short distance apart," which made unnecessary the permanent or periodic removal of families which separated them from the sociopolitical entity that controlled the region. Obviously, this would have consequences at all levels of communal life.

What criteria should be used to define the site of the *ayllu*? Was there one, or more than one? What proportion of the population moved and what proportion stayed in the *ayllu*? How were the social and political hierarchies restructured in each location? How much did family and communal life differ from one region to the next? The book ends by leaving open a series of new possibilities for increasing our knowledge of Andean society, and the documents that are added at the end only reiterate the invitation to this work.

As can be appreciated, we are faced with a veritable quarry of new and fascinating information, although sometimes the language of the documents filters through the author's pen, causing her to sacrifice fluidity for precision in the exposition of her data. This, and a certain imprecision in her use of sociohistorical terminology, are the only weaknesses in a work that was not only necessary but urgently needed. In

any case, her contribution is priceless. She has given to the study of ethnohistory documents that, whether they confirm or question, illuminate central problems; and she has presented a body of information sufficient for the rediscovery of the coastal region as a principal actor in the indigenous past.

Final Thoughts

To say that ethnohistory is the study of the past of people without a written language is only to have begun a definition that would properly embrace the complexity of the subject. Many other considerations must be added. First, our source material comes almost entirely from the Spanish, which is to say that native society is seen from a viewpoint that is foreign to it. The chroniclers, bureaucrats, and priests, whether purposely or not, produced material that had meaning for the society for which it was written. Even when information appears that comes directly from native sources, it is in a version adapted to the needs imposed on them by being diminished members of a society that was oppressing them. Their words, whether testimony or complaint, when they reflect the past, when they describe institutions, and when they answer questions are all colored by the subordinate position in which the speakers found themselves.

The usual training of a historian does not provide tools for penetrating the self-censure of informants. Techniques of social investigation must be used that include references to the geographic environment, patterns of conduct, ideologies, etc. that are in some manner influential in contemporary native life. Only in this way, through sustained fieldwork, can we come close to the society we are trying to discover through the documents.

Another important consideration is the problem of translation. Idioms and different concepts make at best a difficult bridge to a society, especially one which was in no position to produce versions expressing its own interpretations of its life. The "vision of the vanquished" must, therefore, be inferred by people of the twentieth century from the fragments that the known documents offer.

What are the limits of the discipline? One is chronological. In the case of the Andes, ethnohistory is notoriously efficient for the period from the rise of the Tawantinsuyu until the colonial organization effected by the viceroy Toledo. The documents still speak with the voices of the old men who knew Guaina Capac. And the Inca organization, which is being reconstructed little by little, permits more and more glimpses at its origins, when the Incas were a mere tribal confederation or a small kingdom ruled by Cuzco. But further back in time than this, the help of the archaeologists becomes a necessity.

The limits of ethnohistory after this period are more apparent and the need to interpret documents from an ethnological perspective exists for all periods up to the present. But the multitude of materials written by the Spanish, educated natives, and foreign travelers permits the use of conventional historical techniques.

Does this reduce the importance of ethnohistory to mere methodology? Probably so, although this might be only a half-truth, since the characteristics of the period give exceptional force to its discoveries and conclusions. Specialists in this field (in the case of the Andes) must provide more than three countries with the basic elements for the discovery and formation of their national identities.

The pioneering work of Murra and Rostworowski and the seriousness of their research represent milestones in the development of this discipline. Some specialists, using almost the same materials, have offered different perspectives (see Wachtel and Zuidema, for example); others continue to discover and publish valuable information (Espinosa, Guillén, and Pease); and increasingly more refined interpretations are appearing by researchers whose work is now being recognized (Hidalgo, Earls, Rivera Cusicanqui). In any case, this flowering of perspectives and archival material appears to me much more healthy than the cold-blooded discussions characteristic of a sterile scientific milieu. In this sense, the germinal works of the authors reviewed here have already accomplished their purpose.