Negotiated Settlements: Andean Communities and Landscapes under Inka and Spanish Colonialism
STEVEN A. WERNKE
University Press of Florida, Gainesville, 2013. 372 pp., 102 illus., 20 tables, bibliog., index. $79.95 cloth.

In Negotiated Settlements, Steven Wernke discusses how the Collaguas, a powerful Andean ethnic group, engaged with successive Inka and Spanish projects to colonize the Colca Valley of Peru (ca. A.D. 1300–1570). The book skillfully weaves together archaeological data, archival transcriptions, and geographic information systems (GIS) analyses to examine how the Collagua built environment, and its deeply embedded cultural principles of community, troubled Inka and then Spanish colonialism. By focusing on the Collagua’s conflicts and compromises with these imperial powers, Negotiated Settlements offers a novel perspective on colonization, concentrating less on how colonial authorities sought to impose idealized imperial strategies over indigenous peoples and more on the practices through which, and the places where, Collaguas, Inkas, and Spanish negotiated their interests, and, ultimately, improvised a new colonial society.

Wernke sheds new light on processes of colonization by attending to the political significance of “community,” which he defines as a set of social interactions and interests that is continually reformulated through practice. He contends that community is a particularly contested social concept during a process of colonization because it becomes a claim to local indigenous identity, a category for colonial administration, and a target of colonial power. Community thus serves as an “interface,” or what might be termed a site of articulation for local and colonial, commoner and elite, lay and ecclesiastical agendas. This theoretical perspective contrasts many approaches to colonialism, which often employ Foucauldian models of subjectification to study the ways that colonial regimes seek to erase indigenous communities and cultural practices and sharply define colonized subjects by developing institutions that inculcate idealized practices and bodily dispositions. Instead of focusing on how colonizers seek to eradicate indigenous ways of life or how indigenous people seek to resist colonial projects, Wernke concentrates on “the resistance of culture,” that is, the ways that indigenous cultural practices become entangled with, and even essential to, a colonizer’s cultural practices and policies. He traces how, at different times and relative to distinct historical circumstances, the Collaguas negotiated, upheld, or refashioned their own cultural principles such as the ayllu—extensive kin groups that held common lands and claimed common ancestry.

Taking this theoretical approach, Wernke moves beyond stale “domination and resistance” or “colonizer and colonized” historiographical narratives, which reduce colonialism to binaries of opposed and incommensurable historical actors. He reveals how Andean colonial societies were forged by multiple actors: the Inkas who constructed administrative structures in Collagua towns, the indigenous lords (kurakas) who strived to
maintain their position throughout Spanish colonization, and the Franciscan friars who built their chapels in ways that adapted to Collagua village layouts. These actors rooted their claims to authority in the Collagua cultural landscape, a built environment that both constrained and presented opportunities for new imaginings of community, space, and society. In one particularly striking example, Wernke studies how the construction of an early Franciscan mission in a Collagua village affected community life and social interaction. His excavations uncovered a kuraka’s house compound that was built at the beginning of the colonial period. Wernke’s innovative GIS analyses of potential pathways and sightlines within the village suggest that the compound’s location heightened the local kurakas’ affiliation with and surveillance of processions to the Franciscan chapel. Wernke argues: “[t]he location, form, and spatial organization of this compound must have reinforced the authority of the indigenous elites who resided there, even as their authority became associated with the public and sacred spaces of colonial integration—the plaza and the church” (p. 199). This example reveals how processes of colonization often require collusions between different social actors, collusions that reveal a more complex and contingent process of negotiation and opportunism than implied by narratives of “colonizers” and “colonized.”

With this book Wernke raises the bar for historical archaeological research, creatively employing a set of interdisciplinary and multiscalar methods to assemble a detailed account of how the Collaguas experienced, perceived, and influenced Inka and Spanish colonization. In particular, he uses GIS (e.g., least cost path models within settlements, “reverse site catchment analysis”) to uncover and analyze the spatial patterns and social practices that constituted Collagua communities. He examines archaeological and archival data to demonstrate changes and continuities in Collagua settlement patterns and land use before and after Inka and Spanish colonization. He then provides an experience-near view of the village of Malata by modeling how Spanish colonial period constructions in this village required inhabitants to literally turn their backs on an Inka ceremonial complex as they participated in ceremonial processions toward a newly constructed Franciscan chapel. Finally, he matches toponyms from archival documents to contemporary toponyms, and uses GIS to map land tenure patterns of ayllus throughout Inka colonization and into the early Spanish colonial period. Data from the land tenure analysis demonstrate that the moiety organization of the ayllus was first manipulated by the Inkas then actively maintained by the Collaguas, even during the decades after the Spanish conquest when Collagua population declined and many long-used fields were no longer tilled.

In sum, Negotiated Settlements is a detailed account of how Andean people experienced, managed, and manipulated two foreign colonial projects. The book offers a unique perspective on cultural principles in the Andes over a continuous period spanning “pre-Columbian” and “post-conquest” eras—eras that archaeologists and historians typically do not compare because they separate them into distinct analytical fields. The book is theoretically profound, methodologically sophisticated, beautifully illustrated, and empirically rich. It will surely be an instant classic in the anthropological literature on colonialism. Negotiated Settlements should interest a wide range of scholars and students who are interested in the prehistory and history of Latin America, the politics of colonialism, the anthropology
of communities, and the application of spatial methodologies to archaeological and historical research. It will fit perfectly in an upper-level undergraduate class that focuses on the Andes, or a graduate seminar on anthropological approaches to colonization.

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