

Introduction

IN APRIL 1653 FRANCISCA RAMÍREZ, an indigenous resident of Trujillo, Peru, received a notary in her home on what she thought might be her deathbed. The notary, a Spaniard named Antonio Álvarez, took down the careful instructions for her funeral services and burial in the convent church of San Francisco: she should be dressed in the brown habit of the Franciscan order and laid to rest in the chapel of San Antonio de Padua, where she had already made financial arrangements with the prelates. Álvarez filled more of the six double-sided pages of the document with the names of her debtors and creditors, a list of bequests, and a detailed inventory of her worldly possessions: her houses, jewelry, religious images, furniture, bedclothes, and a substantial assortment of clothing. The document describes the provenance of many of these luxurious items: Chinese damask, a small green shawl of Castilian *bayeta* cloth with three rows of gold trim and purple taffeta edging, an embroidered altar cloth from Quito, and two small wooden chests from Belgium. Despite her position as a non-European woman in a small city in colonized South America, the vast majority of her personal effects were items either imported from Europe or those that had been fashioned by local tailors and artisans from imported materials.¹

While Ramírez's inventory of goods encompassed her significant personal wealth, it also represented items for sale in her store. In addition to imported silks and pearl and gold necklaces, she also sold large quantities of the corn beer of indigenous origin, *chicha*, as evidenced by a debt for thirty pesos' worth of corn owed to the royal treasurer don Diego Quirós. The clothing for sale in her store appears to be all after

the European fashion—shawls, skirts, bodices, blouses—and only one item was referred to with indigenous-language terminology, a velvet *lliclla* or rectangular shawl, “still to be made.” An earlier will, dated 1633, makes it clear that she had originally had an indigenous clientele, who purchased from her moveable stall (not yet a store) chicha and Andean women’s dresses called *anacos*, worn with the *lliclla*, though these were made in fabrics other than the more traditional hand-loomed cotton and wool of the Andes. And by the time of what appears to be her fourth and final will, 1686, her entire inventory could not be distinguished from that of a Spanish woman of moderate income.² This might indicate that her clientele had shifted toward Spaniards and mestizos, or it might mean that tastes among urban elites of all ethnicities were converging in these styles.

Francisca Ramírez is provocative for those of us who study gender and ethnicity under Spanish colonial rule. First, she left at least four wills and a number of other documents bearing her name, allowing us to compose at least a partial picture of an Indian woman building a career and a fortune in a moderate-sized urban center over the better part of a long lifetime. Although most indigenous women (or men for that matter) did not leave such extensive paper trails, it is frankly difficult to peruse colonial records without coming across contracts and wills in their names, giving us at least some new perspective on their lives. Ramírez’s case offers, through her many interactions with the notary, unusual insight into the experience of urban indigenous women in seventeenth century Peru.

Second, Ramírez maneuvered through ethnic identifications and social classes in a way that suggests that these categories were fluid and contestatory. In early wills, she appeared as “Francisca Ramírez *yndia*”; in later ones, she was simply “Francisca Ramírez,” with no ethnic marker at all, and at the end of her life she was “doña Francisca Ramírez *yndia*,” acquiring the Spanish marker of hereditary nobility while returning to her juridical status of “Indian.” She exercised her profession in her own name with little apparent difficulty, despite legal restrictions on married women’s economic activities. She served a clientele that encompassed caciques (the indigenous nobility) and elite Spaniards as well as servants, artisans, plebeian Indians, and free and enslaved Africans, according to her accounts. Thus her story enables us to question the longstanding notion that there were meaningful, stable ethnic identities in early colonial Peru and clear-cut social divisions between genders, ethnicities, and classes, in at least some settings.

Third, although Ramírez was married twice, to men apparently of Spanish descent, she was adamant that all her wealth came from her

own exertion and entrepreneurship. In testamentary language common to many men and women of the period, indigenous and Spaniard alike, she calculated what had come from her own “labor and sweat” in clear acknowledgment that colonial law protected her dowry and her half of the couple’s earnings during marriage. We should not take her at her word, of course: her first husband, a carpenter who “brought nothing whatsoever” to her in marriage, did operate what might have been her (or their) first store in his name between 1637 and 1641, and this could represent the expansion of her business from selling from a *cajón* or portable trunk in the plaza of Trujillo to a more permanent establishment with a better clientele.³ But Ramírez appears to have flourished on her own, and was quick to use legal means to defend her interests, including a demand for an ecclesiastical divorce from her second husband and lawsuits against a tenant for arrears.⁴

Francisca Ramírez was certainly an uncommon individual in her time. Her successes, however, suggest that she was particularly good at taking advantage of factors that existed for others as well. The new cash and credit economy; a legal system offering redress to indigenous as well as African and Spanish complainants; Catholic community organizations that provided capital as well as moral support for their memberships; multiple identity and status codes including European, indigenous, and transculturated dress and hair styles—all these were factors that allowed Peru’s colonial inhabitants to move, however slightly and sometimes dramatically, up and down the social scale.

Because of their structural position within the new political economy of colonial Peru, indigenous women (among other subordinate groups) were largely excluded from top-down political processes, such as the writing of legal codes; the administration of the bureaucracy; and the enforcement of ecclesiastical, civil, and criminal laws. However, none of these legal, economic or social systems were perfectly imposed upon the subaltern colonial populations. They were negotiated, contested, and ignored, often in surprising ways. The traces of how these systems came to function within colonial society produce a history of the actions of those excluded from the highest levels; in this case, of indigenous women.

Studying Gender in the Andes

This study follows in the footsteps of many scholars, who have participated in a long and sometimes contentious dialogue about gender in the Andean regions. The pioneer in Peruvian gender studies is indisputably

María Rostworowski, whose attention to the histories of women in social organization virtually created the field (and identified many of the major and more obscure sources). Rostworowski has tirelessly located (mainly elite) women in the historical record and worked to identify the social structures affecting gender relations in prehispanic and colonial Peru. For example, and important for the context of this study, her 1961 analysis of litigation documents from the north coast of Peru demonstrated that, at least in some isolated cases, indigenous women held political office, with prehispanic precedent.⁵ Her attention to the ethnohistories—histories that do not start with the colonial period but reach back into prehispanic times as well—of the less-studied coast as well as the Inca highlands has provided a refreshing and sometimes unexpected perspective, one that has not always been taken up by subsequent historians of gender.⁶

Although Peruvian gender studies began with Rostworowski's work on the coast, the biggest single splash came from the highlands, with Irene Silverblatt's provocative and polemical *Moon, Sun, and Witches*, published in 1987. Silverblatt's theses—that gender was a key component of prehispanic social organization and an important tool in the series of conquests (both Inca and Hispanic) that transformed Andean relations, and that women's political roles, once nearly equal to men's in their own parallel sphere, grew increasingly more restricted and exploitative with each wave of gendered conquest—place gender at the center of understanding communities, states, and empire. Her work concludes, somewhat controversially, that indigenous women suffered disproportionately under Spanish rule, especially the poor, as sexual and economic victims. The heroes of her story are rural women, who were said to have fled to the puna or high scrublands of the Andes in active resistance of colonial rule. Some of Silverblatt's more colorful arguments have now been revisited and challenged, but her recognition of the relationship between social organization and gender has been key in setting the tone for gender studies in the Andes and Latin America more generally.⁷

A contrasting position has been put forth by Elinor Burkett, whose studies of notarial records in the coastal city of Arequipa argue that not only did indigenous women experience the conquest differently than their male counterparts, but they acculturated relatively better than men and in many cases prospered, due at least in part to their proximity to Spanish households, as servants and marketeers.⁸ These findings must, however, be modulated: Burkett's sample came from

wills and other notarial instruments that heavily favored more successful women. Those who did not acculturate as well left few records, with important exceptions such as the seventeenth-century census of household servants analyzed by Luis Miguel Glave, who argues that household servants were among the most miserable members of colonial society, lacking ties to their birth communities and forced to participate in petty manufacturing in addition to their domestic service.⁹ Glave's contention that the failure to maintain ties to natal communities indicates social dislocation is, to my mind, unsubstantiated, but there is no doubt that his investigation properly complicates Burkett's rosier picture.

Works like those of Burkett and Silverblatt, among the first scholars to pay critical attention to women in the Andes, were more than occasionally polemical and tended to utilize universal categories like "women" while speaking of members of particular classes, ethnicities, and locations. They also tended to calculate women's lives in terms of singular categories of "progress" or "loss," treating gender history as a zero-sum game with winners and losers. As Karen Powers has argued, these are part of a larger trend of studies of women in colonial Latin America that have seen women solely in terms of victimhood, be it economic or sexual exploitation.¹⁰ But as social historians have more generally shifted to smaller regional settings and more restricted prognoses, historians of gender have also looked at specific populations and circumstances, offering the possibility of more nuanced and less dichotomous analyses.

Most important, historians place the intersections of gender, class, and ethnicity at the center of their studies, allowing our stories to take complex trajectories that suggest both larger patterns for social groups as well as the possibility that individuals might have various options within society. Ann Zulawski, for example, has studied urban indigenous women in colonial Bolivia, paying attention to "the ways in which gender, class, and ethnicity interacted to foster considerable diversity in women's activities and at the same time limit their economic possibilities."¹¹ Such an approach has now become more commonplace, with a number of studies that attest to the relative success or failure of women of various strata of colonial societies. In particular, the social mobility of urban entrepreneurial women has received a great deal of attention, since this phenomenon flies in the face of so much older ideology about women and work in patriarchal society, as well as the supposed stagnation of colonial society.¹²

Other scholars, however, continue to concentrate upon indigenous women as a marginal community, which they surely were, despite the gains of some. These authors now often utilize Gramscian or Foucauldian theory to show that, although marginalized in the formal sectors, Indian women deployed power in informal yet sometimes potent ways. Such studies have been more common outside of the Andes, yet they must have important reverberations for colonial Peru. Laura Lewis, for example, proposes an “unsanctioned domain” where Indian women sold witchcraft and healing services that undermined the sanctioned power of Spaniards, while reinforcing the hegemonic caste and gender structure of colonial New Spain.¹³ And Martha Few uses Spanish Inquisition and extirpation of idolatry records to bring to light indigenous women’s participation in the social relations of power in colonial Guatemala, again arguing that it was through spell casting and healing that they found agency.¹⁴

These tales of men convinced that their impotence derived from the malefic actions of their Indian or black servants, or of priests visited in humiliating nightmares by sorcerer-witches, are rich and fascinating entrees into the psychology of gender and power in early modern times. Yet the use of religion and sorcery by a (mainly but not always) female underclass to terrorize the bodies and minds of their superiors, or the tendency—more likely—of these superiors to imagine danger in the bodies of those they were exploiting, is by now a truism, illustrated from medieval Europe to colonial Guatemala.¹⁵ Although these studies illuminate the multiethnic and cross-class social networks of colonial society, analyses of power deployed mainly in a psychological realm (albeit occasionally with material benefits) also reinforce the notion that colonial society was clearly drawn into discrete socio-economic-racial categories, that those of European descent always commanded, while those of indigenous and African heritage were always and only the exploited, who could only wield power through limited informal mechanisms like witchcraft.¹⁶

In contrast are studies—like this one—of the ways that those who theory (and law) tells us were marginalized from political-economic power nonetheless found agency in that material realm. Most stunning, perhaps, has been Kathryn Burns’s superb study of the political and economic machinations of the nuns—mostly of Spanish heritage, but including a small number of mestizas—of Cuzco’s convents, who directly and indirectly controlled the major source of financial capital

in that city.¹⁷ Jane Mangan's and Kimberly Gauderman's urban marketwomen of Quito and Potosí were less dramatic in their interventions into law and economy, but nonetheless could be spectacularly successful. In fact, indigenous women and men sat on both sides of the table in colonial Latin America. Many indigenous women, to be sure, were too poor even to appear in the notarial record, but more left their mark than one might think.

The following study, then, enters into this ongoing debate over gender, power, and ethnicity in the Andes, but it proposes to do so in a novel way. First, and unlike nearly all other gender histories of the Americas, it begins within a few decades of the conquest of Peru, asking how gender relations affected and were affected by early contact with Europeans. In particular, this study highlights the enormous economic changes, positive and negative, that took place within a generation or two of conquest and traces how these relations of production, consumption, and distribution changed the lives of men and women in the Andes. Its perspective is predominantly urban—that, of course, is where the richest documentation exists—but it also investigates rural women's economic production (for the urban market) as well as their ongoing ties to their urban kin, as part of the larger context in which urban lives were constructed. By pushing back the starting point for examining colonial history to the 1560s, we can glimpse the reactions of men and women who could still recall life before the arrival of Spaniards as well as study the choices of those born into a colonial system.

We will also consider the lives of women at different ends of the economic scale: members of prehispanic ruling classes who learned to use not only the Spanish legal system but also European preconceptions about gender and politics to their advantage; struggling new converts to Catholicism who scraped together a few coins and personal possessions to pay for funeral rites; and women who rose from domestic service to become entrepreneurs, property owners, and even slave owners. And unlike most previous studies of indigenous women in the colonial economy, this one looks at them in the context of men and women of all ethnic groups. Tracing the trajectories of small groups of indigenous women, as so many have done before, is a useful practice, but it is only by putting them fully within their social context that it is possible to identify the roles played by gender and ethnicity. By using gender as a prism through which we examine the changes brought on

under Spanish colonialism, we can also identify the construction of distinctive ethnic identities as well as a shared colonial world.

Places and Ethnicity: The Formation of Colonial Cities

It has been the thesis of some recent studies that colonial society was far more mobile, more ambiguous, and more contentious than was once thought. As Douglas Cope has argued, for example, seventeenth-century Mexico City was a rather fluid urban center, divided more clearly along class lines than ethnic or racial ones. Ethnic designation was, in fact, not conceptualized in a biologically determinist way, but rather culturally.¹⁸ What we will here call ethnicity, or the perceived belonging to the colonial legal categories of “Spaniard” and “Indian,” did matter.¹⁹ But the acquisition of a set of social and cultural skills (including religion, dress style, and language) was fundamental to access to economic mobility and social position, even among plebeians.

The studies that have come to this conclusion have, for good reason, made very cautious assertions about the societies that produced such ethnic ambiguity and social mobility. They have argued, for example, that this was a late-seventeenth-century phenomenon, caused by a commercial revolution that developed after the 1650s. They have been careful to note the uniqueness of their cases, suggesting, for example, that while Quito might have been integrated, it was unusual in this sense.²⁰ And they have tended to locate integration, mobility, and ambiguity only in the physical spaces of the less elite, taking for granted that the “Spanish” centers remained homogeneous and “pure” while the Indian neighborhoods became multiethnic with the influx of poorer Spaniards, freed slaves, and peoples of mixed descent.

This study, on the other hand, places such integration at the very beginning of colonial relations—in Peru, by the 1560s—and even at the very centers of power, the plazas of colonial cities. While Trujillo and Lima may have been exceptional cases for historical reasons, the notion that a small, often warring group of Spanish elites was able to draw together to create segregated living and working spaces is no longer tenable. Many, and probably most, urban centers became somewhat multiethnic and ethnically interdependent, in their elite as well as plebeian neighborhoods, within a generation or two of the conquest.

In great part, this occurred because the commercial revolution that other authors have placed firmly in the late seventeenth century really began in the sixteenth, almost contemporary with the arrival of

Spaniards in the New World.²¹ Merchants rapidly circulated goods between Europe and the Americas; then between American cities; and eventually between even small, mainly indigenous towns. The small population of Spaniards was hardly adequate to sustain trade by itself. Markets became ubiquitous, from urban real estate markets feeding upon the shifting fortunes of falling conquistadors and rising indigenous elites, to the second-hand clothes auctions that took place after the death of even the poorest residents.

It therefore seems likely, if ironic, that it was the earliest period of colonial rule that offered the most flexibility and opportunity to those who were not members of the conquering classes. Most historical studies, however, have tended to place the greatest weight upon later years, when processes of centralization were taking form and economic transactions increased. Not coincidentally, the volume of documentation also increased over the seventeenth century, and those materials are more likely to have survived to the present. Thus this study begins at the earliest period when notarial records are available, the mid-sixteenth century, taking us through the next 150 years.

Through an analysis of documents from Lima and Trujillo, Peru, I argue, then, that the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries provided ambiguous spaces where ethnic and gendered identities were being hammered out, and the ethnically dichotomous class domination that European colonists hoped to impose was still in the process of formation. This reading of colonial life suggests that, despite our knowledge of the outcome for Latin America—where to this day indigenous communities are often marginalized and impoverished—inhabitants of early colonial Peru did not necessarily see their options in such stark terms and used multiple and malleable categories of identity in the circumstances of their lives.

Two Republics? Colonial Settlement in Peru

Despite its intention to create a unified Christian society in the New World, the Spanish Crown utilized a dualistic model of governance, adapted from its experience exacting tribute from newly conquered Muslim and Jewish populations in an increasingly Christian Iberia.²² The European and indigenous populations were theoretically to be maintained apart in spheres known as *repúblicas*, each with its own legal and religious apparatus, though they were not autonomous and at top were governed by the same (Spanish) individuals. Although

these were not territorial designations, the “Republic of Indians” was assumed to have jurisdiction over the scattered rural populations as well as those prehispanic towns not taken over by Spaniards for their own use. The “Republic of Spaniards” (which included all peoples other than Indians, including free and enslaved Africans and the ethnically mixed groups known as *castas*) would have its seat in the new cities, founded by European settlers who evicted local populations and often built over their structures. In an early moment the Spanish Crown theorized that some Indians would profit so quickly from the European encounter that they would become excellent Christians and be able to govern themselves freely and equally with Spaniards, but this optimistic phase ended before South American settlement was underway in the early sixteenth century.²³ The two republics were expected to be interdependent (Spaniards needing Indian labor, Indians needing Spanish religious guidance) yet segregated.

Each “republic” had its own hierarchy, representing the power dynamics of contact society. Although the Spaniards lacked a significant titled nobility, they included a small elite made up of conquistadors given grants of Indian labor (called *encomenderos*), high-ranking bureaucratic officials (often on temporary assignments), and international merchants. The indigenous nobility fought to retain their access to privilege, including exemption from tribute payments and access to Indian labor and the ears of the colonial government. Both contained middling groups, including artisans and traders who were dependent upon these elite retainers for access to wealth and laborers, and a large plebeian sector, including the entire Indian peasant population as well as the lower segment of Spanish society. The lower classes also included African slaves, first brought to Peru by Francisco Pizarro to help in the expeditions and explorations of South America. Free and enslaved Africans were not an enormous presence in the first century of colonization, but they probably equaled the Spanish population in number and were, like the Europeans, concentrated in coastal cities.²⁴ In fact, a very small group of conquistador/*encomenderos* extracted tribute from a vast indigenous population, until the Spanish Crown reined them in and slowly substituted a decentralized bureaucratic apparatus. Vigorous, often illegal, competition for access to both the producing masses and the elites who collected and lived off tribute characterized the colony’s early economy.

It is obvious that any scheme to maintain these republics physically separate was bound to fail, given that the productivity of Indians was

to be the sole basis for Spanish wealth. The failures of this project have been related in numerous studies, and need not be rehearsed here except to note that colonization refashioned the activities, values, and tastes of all concerned.²⁵ Indigenous populations were shuffled to new locations, reorganized according to the whims of lesser and higher officials, and forced to produce commodities that they themselves had little use for, most notably silver. Indigenous elites quickly learned to use the legal system and other instruments of colonial power to their own personal, and less often communal, benefit. Early rule was, for most, an economic disaster, characterized by a dismal mortality rate, political and social fragmentation and reorganization, and general impoverishment. The Spanish Crown and its viceregal representatives found themselves faced with constant crises, proposing and implementing reforms intended to increase the flow of silver and gold to European coffers, to fund not only Spain's wars in Europe, but also growing administrative and military expenses in its colonies.²⁶

Not only did European colonization encroach upon these "Indian towns," through priests, bureaucrats, and overseers who observed their subjects' progress in memorizing Christian catechism and learning the proper work ethic, but central to policy in the Andes, as in Mexico, a forced labor draft was instituted that moved large segments of the rural indigenous population in and out of cities on a regular basis. Peru's *mita*, a term borrowed from Quechua that once described the annual labor service ceremonially "requested" by the Inca and coordinated by local *kurakas* or lords, now brought large groups of indigenous men, women, and children into mining centers and other urban sites to work for Spaniards.²⁷ There they mined for ores and mercury, refined precious metals, constructed innumerable Catholic churches, built and maintained irrigation systems and roads, and carried out other monumental projects. But another effect of all these forced labor projects was to bring Indians into close relation with Spanish society, markets, and labor specializations and expectations.

The fact that so much of the indigenous population of Peru remained in rural towns belies the scope of the changes that took place after Spanish conquest. While some institutions and aspects of culture remained under local control, European values and demands entered rural society in numerous and often indirect ways, via the crops now required for tribute, new kinds of markets and monetary exchange, and the institution of private property and the legal system designed to support it.²⁸ Temporary and permanent migration also increased

the connections between cities and rural areas, further breaking down the notion that Indian towns might be segregated from Spanish urban centers. As we shall see below, many migrants joined new urban communities and appear to have left behind their old kin and ways, yet others continued to hold and manage property in rural areas, and some purchased lands in agricultural communities closer to their new urban homes. City and town were not fully integrated, but both experienced colonial transformations.

And although cities were meant to be reserved for a European elite, they too rapidly followed their own logics. In Peru, conquistadors who had impressed Francisco Pizarro with their service received *encomiendas*, grants usually entailing political control over a native cacique or overlord who was then responsible for supplying the labor of his subjects. In exchange for this minor lordship, encomenderos agreed not only to care for native souls, but also to settle and defend the new district. They would build their houses around the *plaza de armas*, the symbolic center of the new cities. That this residential requirement was of primary importance to the Spanish Crown and of lesser appeal to the encomenderos (who preferred to live in more cosmopolitan capitals) is evident from the many royal provisions of the 1530s and 1540s ordering, for example, "that the encomenderos keep their houses populated and that they live in the city of the district of their encomiendas." This requirement came concomitant with repeated, but not always well-enforced, orders that encomenderos marry or bring their wives over from Spain.²⁹

The question of residence was more than simply about stability of settlement; as Valerie Fraser notes, most early cities were built atop existing Indian towns and included large Indian populations that could only be displaced by the constant incursion of European colonists. For a city like Trujillo, where even in 1575 only one in four residents was of direct Spanish extraction, a constant and armed occupation of its center was a necessity.³⁰

These new leading citizens had to be housed in conditions befitting their status, in sites around a gridded plaza, with its central church and municipal buildings. The public plaza would become integral to the performance of power relations and hierarchy throughout the baroque colonial period. City dwellers also needed central access to markets and ports. These gridded "Spanish cities" had little relation to anything extant in Spain, and really represented an idealization of European values deployed as a part of the process of colonization. Indian populations—the dispossessed inhabitants, but also those who mi-

grated to and from the cities with the cycles of the mita—were intended to be corralled into walled communities, like Lima’s Cercado, or at least kept outside the city walls, as in Trujillo’s plan.³¹

The Royal Orders on settlements of 1573 asserted that no Indians should even be allowed to enter a Spanish city until it is entirely built, “so that when the Indians do see it they are amazed . . . and they will fear [the Spaniards] and will not dare offend them, and they will respect them and wish to have their friendship.” Yet, as Fraser also reminds us, this was impossible given that no Spaniard would perform the labor of building a city when there were subjected Indian populations nearby to exploit.³² And although there were attempts to gather Indian laborers into segregated neighborhoods, the need for artisans, laborers, domestic servants, and vendors meant that even residences and households were quickly multiethnic.

Thus neither the Spanish nor the Indian “republic” could be, or was even truly meant to be, entirely segregated. The Indian labor force was the basis for most economic life in the colonies, and the religious and social mission of the conquest necessitated European Christian overseers for their new flocks. Although formal interrelationships like cross-ethnic marriages were unusual, and sometimes officially frowned upon by the Spanish Crown, quotidian interactions were the rule rather than the exception. Even Polo de Ondegardo, a legal and economic advisor to the viceroy, admitted in 1571 that “there are not two republics but only one.”³³

Two Colonial Cities: Lima and Trujillo

Lima and Trujillo were two of these early Spanish cities, built on the lands of coastal indigenous groups to the demands of the new *vecinos* or propertied citizens (see Map 1). Lima had been a southern valley settlement of some 200,000 people under the jurisdiction of the kuraka or lord of Lima, probably a religious center as well as a town, and was not far from the important temple and ceremonial center of Pachacamac. It was founded in January 1535 by Francisco Pizarro as a settlement from which the Spaniards might control their new conquests. Trujillo, in the Moche Valley, along the north coast near where Pizarro had first made his approach to the Inca in Cajamarca, was less densely settled and was probably the site of ancient *huacas* or mountainlike shrines in the Chimú realm, not far from its massive political seat, Chan Chan. Trujillo came into legal existence in late 1534, founded by Diego



Viceroyalty of Peru and environs.

de Almagro in order to establish Spanish domination over local indigenous lords, who had recently murdered some Spaniards.³⁴

Both quickly became important colonial settlements, organized for access to maritime trade as well as local labor and resources like water and wood. Lima would rapidly grow to become a major hub of movement, of peoples as well as commodities. Trujillo never achieved quite this economic or social scale, but was prosperous enough due to the *encomiendas*, *haciendas*, and sugar plantations organized by the early settlers.³⁵

The cities were laid out on irregular gridded plans, with central plazas where first a church, and then a cathedral, as well as *Cabildo* (municipal government) offices would be rapidly constructed. From these plazas radiated the *solares*, quarter-block plots that would be offered to the conquistadors who found favor with the Crown. Other Spaniards would soon join the first *vecinos*—clergy, merchants, artisans, and unskilled laborers who hoped to siphon off some of Peru's celebrated silver for themselves.

The conquistadors rapidly dispossessed and removed the original indigenous inhabitants of the Lima Valley. In the 1560s, the cacique don Gonzalo argued that his Indians should be exempt from tribute payment because their lands were in the hands of Spaniards, and "we are very scattered and very few."³⁶ I have found no parallel information about the natives of the Moche valley, though we can imagine that they too were slowly displaced to the margins of Trujillo as their lands were redistributed. As these left, indigenous immigrants from the rural areas around the city began to move in, alongside African men and women freed from slavery.

Thus migration was an important factor for the establishment of populations in both cities; in the early years, nearly all their inhabitants were (by definition) immigrants and subsequently there were always large influxes of new immigrants of all backgrounds, particularly from outlying rural communities where demographic collapse and the encroachment on community lands led to increasing tribute burdens and made the cities attractive for short-term labor contracts or long-term stays.³⁷ By the beginning of the seventeenth century—the first period for which there are even marginally reliable population studies of both cities—each city had a substantial and economically important indigenous minority. Lima, with a population counted by one contemporary source as 25,447 in 1614, had some 2,000 Indians registered as living and working within it (the real figure is certainly higher than

this, not to mention the regular groups of mita workers that came through the city). Trujillo, a much smaller city of less than 3,500 residents in 1604, was 36 percent indigenous, with another 32 percent roughly categorized as “black or mulatto.” The final 32 percent was recorded as a mixture of Spaniards and mestizos, suggesting that the actual population who could trace all of their ancestry back to Europe was a minority, perhaps just a few hundred men and women.³⁸ Given the ethnic fluidity we have mentioned, these census numbers are hardly unchallengeable, but they do suggest the multiethnic makeup of both supposed “Spanish” centers.

Not only were the cities multiethnic, but everyday life was similarly integrated. Indigenous men and women lived in close contact with Spaniards, blacks, and people of various ethnic mixes (*castas*), as apprentices, servants, tenants, and neighbors. Even the most concentrated Indian neighborhoods included non-Indian inhabitants as well as Indians of various socioeconomic classes: Lima’s Cercado, purportedly closed to non-Indians by its Jesuit founders, included Spanish, mestizo, and African tenants, and some Indian households even owned African slaves.³⁹

The culture of daily life even more insistently demanded integration, since Indian men and women held crucial jobs as marketeers, artisans, domestic servants, and construction workers. All manner of people were dependent upon indigenous and *casta* vendors and store owners for staple goods; middle- and upper-income homes (of all ethnicities) had African slaves and indigenous, African, and European domestic servants; people of all classes and ethnicities sought out indigenous and *casta* healers. Indians also apprenticed to and served (legally or not) as shoemakers, tailors, silversmiths, painters, construction workers, ceramicists, and makers of hats and hosiery and even musical instruments. It would have been a sheltered Spaniard indeed whose path did not cross with other ethnicities regularly (and even those Spaniards most notable for being sheltered—cloistered nuns—lived among Indians, mestizos, and Africans in their convents).⁴⁰

Although Trujillo had a smaller population overall, it may have been less stratified in some ways than was Lima. For example, the Cabildo of Trujillo sold solares within the city to Indians who “lived like Spaniards” and even made one Indian, Rodrigo Suarez, a *vecino* in 1553, so ordering because “he speaks Spanish and is married and has the occupation of tailor and has children and so that he may [raise] them as Christians and in the law of reason and that others may take

him as an example and do the same as he."⁴¹ Trujillo's *cofradías*—religious sodalities so important to the construction of community life in the cities—were likewise not segregated by ethnicity, as they sometimes were in Lima. Trujillo was hardly egalitarian, of course, and the original encomendero elite was so entrenched in local government that a number of its merchants, artisans, and farmers, long excluded from power, became the founding citizens of an autonomous new town, Santiago de Miraflores de Saña, in the nearby Saña Valley.⁴² Trujillo's cultural identity would shift drastically in later periods, when African slaves were imported in growing numbers to work the sugar plantations that became the region's economic mainstay, while the indigenous population suffered high mortality and migration rates. But during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries, the focus of this study, Trujillo was profoundly multiethnic.

Who were these urban immigrants? According to Lynn Lowry's analysis of an incomplete 1613 census of Lima's Indians, more than 60 percent of the indigenous population it enumerated had been in Lima fewer than five years, and only 22 percent had lived there between six and ten years. Only a total of twenty-five Indians, or 3 percent of the surveyed population, had lived in that city for more than twenty years. In terms of how and why people immigrated, Lowry calculates that the great majority of Indian males arrived in Lima before they were twenty years old, suggesting that many came as servants or as laborers rather than established in an occupation. No equivalent data exist for women, but they probably arrived as youthful (even preadolescent) domestic servants, as wives of migrating laborers, or—as historians have culled from the records of idolatry proceedings—fleeing miserable home lives and abusive husbands.⁴³ Many of these single men and women would live in the households of wealthy families or would rent rooms from landlords.

Unfortunately there is no early residential survey of Trujillo comparable to the 1613 Lima census, with its remarkable wealth of ethnographic detail. A fragmentary census from 1604 and archival records do, however, offer some interesting parallels as well as compelling images of the city in its own right. According to the census, at the turn of the seventeenth century Trujillo boasted some 166 houses, "inhabited by the *Justicia* and *Regimiento* [the colonial judicial and bureaucratic officials], ecclesiastics, *vecinos* [here specifically property-owning citizens], *encomenderos*, *ciudadanos* [residents of less property and standing], merchants, businesspeople, artisans, young unmarried

women, widows and single women." Approximately one half of the total Indian population was resident in the houses of the vecinos; the rest lived in their own homes or rented houses and solares, working as artisans or farmers. The majority of the vecinos of Trujillo were encomenderos, whose insecure wealth was produced by the rapidly dwindling rural indigenous communities of the province.⁴⁴

Trujillo, like Lima, was not separated into ethnic neighborhoods until nearly a century after its foundation. In fact, within a few decades of the contentious division of the solares of its plaza among the leading Spanish conquerors of the region, Indians, mestizos, plebeian Spaniards, and even Africans had taken ownership of many of them. In the face of constantly changing economic fortunes, many conquistadores found themselves selling or abandoning prime solares, and they were bought out by those who had prospered. Some of these previously excluded residents even found themselves able to become citizens, a designation often thought to have been reserved for Spaniards.⁴⁵ In 1603, Viceroy Velasco ordered a zone called San Esteban created outside the city limits to accommodate the indigenous immigrants who "in order to enjoy liberty come here from their towns."⁴⁶ But a large population remained living among the Spaniards, and a significant number owned or rented solares within the city limits.

Households were integrated as well as neighborhoods. All wealthy Spanish households included some combination of Indian, mestizo, and/or Spanish servants as well as enslaved men and women of African descent. Living arrangements also included rentals of apartments or chambers that also crossed ethnic and other social boundaries. It was, for example, common for indigenous artisans to rent office and living spaces in larger compounds. The proceedings of a criminal action in 1606 recount how an Indian named Agustina was knifed in her Spanish mistress's kitchen by Agustín Colquemango, an Indian tailor who rented a chamber in that house. Other household members who gave testimony included two indigenous *yanaconas* or retainers, a black woman, and two young Spanish women, apparently all servants.⁴⁷

Lima's housing was similarly mixed, as artisans employed Indian workers and apprentices, and landlords rented rooms or shacks (called *apostentos*) to anyone who would pay. For example, the 1613 Lima census described "the house of Juan de Lemos, surgeon; in his corral there lived some Indians in rented *apostentos*" including a fisherman from coastal Ica, another from highland Chachapoyas, a married couple from Trujillo, and a married woman from Chancay whose husband was away in

Cuzco. The very next house belonged to a free black or mulatto woman, who rented her aposento to an Indian tailor from Chachapoyas.⁴⁸

The living arrangements in both cities complemented working relations: the indigenous residents provided foodstuffs for all, selling in the central plazas as well as through shops and informal arrangements. Lima's streets were originally named after the trades located there, including *Mantas* (shawls), *Botoneros* (buttonmakers), *Escribanos* (notaries and scribes), *Espaderos* (swordmakers), *Plateros* (silversmiths), and *Bodegonos* (general merchandise stores).⁴⁹ These blocks housed stores selling goods that came to the cities from overseas via tradeships, overland from the highlands, or from surrounding farms and haciendas.

In summary, the two urban centers we have compared here are notable for their mutability and transculturation, which were key characteristics from the earliest years of colonial settlement rather than the effects of opening commercial markets in the late seventeenth century. Over the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, thousands of men and women arrived in Lima and Trujillo, some coming from the Iberian peninsula and African coasts, but many were migrants from rural indigenous communities within the viceroyalty of Peru and elsewhere in the Spanish colonies. Together they constructed colonial life and, as a byproduct, produced their own identities as members of corporate groups such as "Indians," but also as individuals on the ever-shifting margins.

Methods and Sources

A final aspect of the present study that bears discussion is its consideration of aspects of material culture as well as economic and political analysis. That is, it seeks to learn how indigenous women experienced their lives, in some limited way, by investigating how they used their access to new material possessions brought by contact with Europe. This chapter began with a glimpse of a woman's life through the reading of a series of wills she left across the seventeenth century. It is my contention that Francisca Ramírez made choices about her self-presentation and her clientele, mirrored in her changing stock of fashionable clothing. As her fortunes increased, she was able to utilize different sets of cultural codes, drawn indirectly or directly from Europe, Africa, and the Americas, that were concurrently available to her. My analysis of archival evidence shows that this was a common practice, that men and women used fashion and other possessions to signify their

relationship to a changing social order, and the state often saw this as a threat. More broadly, certain colonial residents—mainly urban and/or elite—drew upon a hybrid or transculturated set of social structures as part of their attempts to accommodate or simply survive colonial rule. These social structures reflected predecessors in the Americas as well as Spain and Africa, yet were newly configured to respond to the new environment.

Hybridity, as used here, is not a contextless menu of choices spread before subalterns, nor is it something experienced as a traumatic break from norms.⁵⁰ The term encompasses both the actions of accommodation to the demands of colonial society and also the material effects of those actions, and thus hybridity was an organic response by groups and individuals to their changing environment. But a careful analysis of circulating commodities as well as shifting legal and social strategies indicates that at least certain groups of colonial subjects not only experienced this transculturation but recognized the novelty of their situations and were conscious of the repercussions of their choices for their presence as part of new social groups.

The process of adapting aspects of a conquering culture is well documented around the colonial world. Fernando Ortíz, in his seminal study of tobacco and sugar in Cuba, coined the term *transculturation* to emphasize that this was not simply a matter of colonized subjects adapting to the culture of their masters—his critique of a literature describing colonial “acculturation”—but one of jointly forging a dynamic culture that is (often violently) transformed by colonizer as well as colonized.⁵¹ Ortíz’s insights are foundational to this study, which investigates the transculturation of colonial institutions in early Peru and firmly rejects any notion that the use of Spanish law or clothing, for two pointed examples, by indigenous subjects represented a loss of agency in the colonial world.

Cultural theorists have tinkered endlessly with this language, often out of concern that certain terms privilege one group of actors over another or imply a particular trajectory of change. Although this theoretical hairsplitting reflects a well-intentioned desire for exactitude as well as respect for our subjects, it has also led to a morass of academic jargon that takes us far from the historical moment.⁵² On the other hand, colonial subjects created their own cultural languages to demarcate their positions, one that would do us well to investigate.

Residents of colonized towns and cities did see much of the world as a menu of cultural codes containing ethnic allegiances and political

ramifications. When Francisca Ramírez stocked her *cajón* or trunk with llicllas and anacos, she was participating in an economy that signified the subordinate status of tributary Indians, who produced, bought, and wore such garments. When her income and status allowed, she dressed in silks from the Far East, worn according to the fashion of a European woman, signifying her decision to participate in a more elite political economy that was not “natural” to her as it was to women of Spanish origin. The fact that, as we shall see below, class and regional factors overwhelmingly correlated with these sartorial decisions (and options), as well as the existence of laws and commentaries that attempted to discipline bodies that dressed “inappropriately,” indicate that colonial residents well understood the significance of their clothes to the social order. It is these significations that require a new vocabulary from us, to mark the ways in which people self-consciously were agents of change.

One way to describe these cultural changes is *creolization*, a term used more by historians of colonial North America than of Latin America, to refer to cultural and especially linguistic shifts that occurred with the migration of new populations to the New World.⁵³ The etymology of the word *criollo* is still a bit murky: it seems to be related to the Portuguese word *crioulo*, itself derivative of *criar*, to grow.⁵⁴ It was certainly used to describe people of African descent born in the New World, as opposed to the *bozal*, or person born in Africa.⁵⁵ (This may have been its original use; in Brazil *crioulo* still only refers to “blackness.”) From there, the term appears to have been taken over by other groups, including (and most famously) by people of Spanish descent born in the Americas, thus acquiring another patina of temperament and social expectations: creoles as “authentic” Americans capable of self-determination, or as spoiled and deformed Spaniards, inept to rule themselves, depending upon the speaker’s prejudice. Latin American historians tend to gloss creole as simply meaning “born in.” But a straightforward geographic identification is misleading: individual African men and women can be traced through a process of moving, in the documentary record, from *bozales* to *criollos* over a lifetime, suggesting that the acquisition of the Spanish language, conversion to Christianity, and other cultural features were at stake more than one’s birthplace.⁵⁶

But most interesting, perhaps, is the use of this term by indigenous men and women beginning at the turn of the seventeenth century, to describe those Indians born in or associated with urban centers rather than in rural indigenous communities as *indios criollos*. Here Indians saw their own creolization not simply as a matter of birthplace (since

Indians by definition were born in the New World) but as an association with a particular urban colonial culture and an alienation from *ayllu* or community life and tributary status. As we will see, this particular (and largely un-commented) Spanish American usage indicates a self-consciousness about changes in place and culture at this early juncture in the colonial period. While they may not have theorized themselves as “hybrid,” clearly indigenous men and women wanted to mark off difference in ways that mattered to them in the context of competing cultural codes.⁵⁷

Thus this study intends not only to describe the various ways that indigenous women accommodated the increasingly creolized colonial world that faced them in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but also to imagine, through the documentary record, how they might have experienced these changes. Wills, then, become the most enticing documents left from the colonial world, since they offer this entry point into daily life and, to a degree, consciousness, albeit at moments of great crisis and under deeply mediated conditions. A substantial database of indigenous women’s wills, 55 from Trujillo and 147 from Lima, covering the period 1565–1698, forms the core of this study. These testaments have been culled from the hundreds of notarial registers in the central archives of those cities, and while they do not constitute all the wills still extant, they represent a fair cross section of classes, social statuses, neighborhoods, and occupations. These wills have been supplemented by a number of other sources, including records of economic (especially real estate and labor market) transactions from notarial registers; transcripts of civil and criminal trials; ecclesiastical records; censuses and *visitas* (administrative inspections); legal commentaries; and chronicles left by colonial adventurers and authors. And importantly, a large and diverse set of supplementary wills left by indigenous men as well as men and women of other ethnicities, from former slaves to elite Spaniards, has also been compiled in order to provide contrast and context for deciding what actions and issues could be considered a function of gender and ethnicity as opposed to part of a more common social structure. As a result, this study offers a truly rich portrait of colonial society, with a broad sweep focused by attention to a series of questions about social and economic relations in women’s lives.

Wills were written by people who typically fell into one or both of two categories: those with property they sought to protect or assign after death (which could be small or substantial) and the Catholic faithful, who worried that their progress out of purgatory would be slowed

without the proper masses and funeral rites. Because the culture of colonial Latin America, like that of early modern Spain, was obsessed with record keeping, vast numbers of men and women called upon notaries on their deathbeds or at other moments when mortality was a concern, including prior to childbirth and long voyages. Many of these were relatively well-off, with property, furnishings, and cash income to be protected and distributed. But a surprising number were truly poor, some only possessing a couple of used garments that might be sold for a few coins to pay for a keenly desired burial and mass. In fact, the hospitals, known as dumping grounds for the dying poor, were patrolled by notaries and priests who were encouraged by hospital officials to extract wills from patients, so that their bills could be settled. As a result, the wills surveyed here do not only present the upper strata of colonial society, but a diverse group of individuals who chose, for different reasons, to use a notary's services at times of crisis.

The role of the notary (and the legal system more generally) cannot be underestimated in the writing of a will or any other legal document from the period.⁵⁸ Testaments followed accepted formats, though deviations were possible, and they included personal information that could reflect statements made by the testator or simply the opinion of the notary, for example, the marginal notes that often recorded the ethnicity of the testator. Wills almost invariably recited formulaic invocations of the Holy Trinity and saints in the Catholic pantheon, as well as provided for religious services after death. Yet they often included detailed lists of personal belongings, sometimes described by the notary as he literally opened chests and boxes in the testator's home, and they do offer personal information in idiosyncratic forms. Thus while we must make allowances for the mediations of the state and its agent, the notary, wills and other notarial documents can give us access to parts of the social structure not otherwise open to view.

Conclusion: The Formation of a Colonial Society

The project undertaken in these chapters, then, is to investigate colonial institutions in their process of formation, to understand both the expectations and demands of colonizers, on the one hand, and the ways that indigenous peoples, especially women, contested and changed these. But I also highlight here the lived experience of daily life under colonial rule, from the integration of native populations into the market and world economy, to the forms of self- and other-identification utilized by

colonial subjects, not reducible to “Indians” and “Spaniards.” Thus I will examine aspects of the lives of some of the poorest and most marginalized as well as the most privileged and thus most threatened and intrigued by colonial integration.

Chapter 1 will take us to rural communities, where Indians held in *encomienda* faced the earliest challenges of colonization. Required to produce masses of commodities for tribute, from food products to cloth to mineral wealth, they had to reorganize themselves to maintain their own levels of subsistence and to make up for the loss of community members from early death and migration. The example of tributary cloth production, perceived as an enormous burden by many communities, demonstrates not only this process of reorganization but also the specific effects of this new political economy on the gender division of labor, where women became the major producers of cloth for tribute as well as for the market. As a result, indigenous women moved rapidly into wage labor relations and the colonial market and learned to utilize the viceregal legal system to seek redress when cheated by the *encomenderos*, priests and merchants who loosely employed them.

Chapter 2 follows some of these women as they emigrated to urban centers, where they, like indigenous men, had to make a new place for themselves. For many, the route began with domestic service, but often encompassed multiple income-earning strategies over a lifetime, including producing food and beverages for market, selling assorted commodities, purchasing and renting out real estate, and owning small businesses and enslaved laborers. We will follow a somewhat exceptional group of these women, who left wills documenting their estates and their religious beliefs, to examine how new communities were formed out of diverse migrant populations in these multiethnic centers.

Wills also provide us a glimpse into the frustrations of these colonial lives; they are instruments that seek to protect assets from usurpers, they attempt to recover property that has been taken away, and they try to restore honor at the end of life. In Chapter 3, we look at these various strategies to see what they tell us about the trials faced by urban indigenous women and how these might be similar to and different from the concerns of indigenous men.

Chapter 4 moves from the external relations of property and occupation to ask how indigenous men and women differentiated themselves in a multiethnic urban world. Through an analysis of changing clothing styles, we see a conversation about identity developing, fostered by the availability of new status products from Europe, broader

access to high status products from Inca Peru, and the flooding of markets with regional tributed cloth. As well, indigenous men and women found other ways to identify themselves, as property owners, as members of an artisan class, and by place of birth.

Finally, with Chapter 5 we return to rural Peru, this time to examine the political careers of a group of elite women. These noblewomen were able to take advantage of certain aspects of Iberian inheritance law as it transferred to the colonies and what was at least a mythology about preconquest female lords to promote their candidacy for *cacica*, or female chiefs. The success of a few isolated cases quickly led to an expansion across the viceroyalty, although this came concomitant with a decline in the status of the *cacicazgo* (chieftanship).

The following chapters examine, then, the lives of indigenous women in two coastal cities, Lima and Trujillo, and their rural environs in the early years of Spanish colonization. As more than half of the indigenous population after its precipitous sixteenth-century decline, and a far larger presence in the colony than Spaniards of either gender, indigenous women were assuredly ubiquitous in the social, economic, and political lives of their towns and cities.⁵⁹ They produced and sold much of the food and clothing consumed in the colony, they raised children and cleaned houses for the upper and middle classes, they provided midwifery and healing services, they owned real estate and even slaves and, on occasion, held political office. As a result we can see them as indispensable to the construction of the incipient colonial society, but we can also watch colonial society develop through them.