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THE ETHNOS, HISTORIES, AND CULTURES OF ETHNOHISTORY: A VIEW FROM THE US ACADEMY

Ana María Lorandi opens discussion of the present state of (Andean) ethnohistory, a practice caught between the disciplinary gatekeepers of history and anthropology, with a fine thumbnail sketch of the emergence of ethnohistorical practice concerning the Andes, and a host of well-phrased questions deserving more, and more thorough answers than space or my own scholarly competence will allow. I will return to questions of scholarly competence, which are important in addressing some of Prof. Lorandi's questions. Within a brief essay that nicely outlines the convergences and divergences of history and anthropology, she makes two incontestable major points: having emerged first among anthropologists, ethnohistory -in brief, the history of Indians-, has waned within the discipline, and has shifted -along with work on the intercultural formations of the colonial era and attention to urban phenomena- largely into the discipline of history; but having taken up the master theoretical framework of anthropology -a focus on culture- along with anthropology's subject matter -Indians-, the historians have not felt it necessary to acknowledge the disciplinary source of their concern with culture. What accounts for these facts? What can anthropology do to recover its former subject matter at the disciplinary border? These are good questions, and in her genealogy of the respective fields and their zone of overlap, Prof. Lorandi goes a long way toward answering the first of them. The second is left as an open question for us all.

Without aiming to provide an overall picture of Andean ethnohistory over the past forty years, or to retrace the steps of Prof. Lorandi's essay, I would limit myself here to adding some nuances to this history of the vicissitudes of ethnohistory from the point of view of my own experience -that is, the academic world of the US. I would also portray in somewhat more detail the

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quirkiness of the enterprise of ethnohistory vis a vis other 'ethno' hyphenated specialities within anthropology. And finally, I would comment on certain problems with the anthropological concept of culture that has been adopted not just by historians, but by scholars in a variety of fields -particularly in language and literature departments-, loosely called 'cultural studies'. For the fact is that the concept(s) of culture that drove ethnohistory, as well as the concept(s) of history that anthropology took up from the historians, inhibited the development of a more ethnographically-driven theorizing about both 'culture' and 'history', as well as about the colonial contexts that produced the concept of ethnicity and the kinds of radical alterity that were anthropology's *métier*.

A Personal View of the Trajectory of Andean Ethnohistory in the USA

Both the Andes and ethnohistory first came to my attention as an undergraduate student at the University of Michigan in the early 1970s, when I took a course on *Inca Cosmology* from John Earls -who now teaches at Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú (PUCP) in Lima. Earls was completing his Ph.D. under the direction of R. Tom Zuidema, but I also learned about work on the Incas by John H. Rowe, John V. Murra, and a host of Peruvian, Ecuadorean, Argentine, Chilean, British, German, and French scholars. Here I will stick with the US academy, where Zuidema, Murra, and Rowe were the leading -anthropological- stars of three strong 'schools' of Andean -that is, Inca- ethnohistory. Earls soon departed for Peru, not to return to the US, and I continued my training in anthropology at the University of Chicago, without any Andes-specific mentor but attuned to the intersection of anthropology and history by Marshall Sahlins, Terence Turner, Jean Comaroff, and Bernard Cohn, among others. By the time I completed my doctorate, twelve years after starting it and after eighteen months of ethnographic work and about eight months of archival work, I had accumulated the extra training in paleography and historical method, as well as Andes-centered mentoring and collegial conversation, from via the scholarly generosity of -among others Murra, Rowe, and Zuidema, plus other scholars of their generation -such as Franklin Pease, Maria Rostworowski, and Nathan Wachtel-, and a succeeding generation consisting of Antonio Acosta, Rolena Adorno, Xavier Albó, Berta Ares, Thérèse Bouysse, David Cook, Luis Miguel Glave, Catherine Julien, Ana Maria Lorandi, Sabine MacCormack, Luis Millones, Tristan Platt, Karen Powers, Ana Maria Presta, Susan Ramírez, Joanne Rappaport, Roger Rasnake, Mercedes del Rio, Gilles Riviere, Thierry Saignes, Frank Salomon, Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz, Irene Silverblatt, Karen Spalding, Geoffrey Spurling, Steve J. Stern, Enrique

Tandeter, Gary Urton, and Rafael Varón. I did not belong to one of the three Andeanist 'schools' in the US, but whatever I have learned about the Andes is a product of a great deal of mentoring and scholarly debt. I have left out students of these, along with a host of scholars whose work is mainly ethnographic, and many historians whose work does not focus heavily on Indians. Some major scholars I have never had the good fortune to meet or converse with. And of course I will have forgotten to include some names

There are quite a few US-based anthropologists on the above list, and some of them have trained students in Andean ethnohistory. But these days when a prospective ethnohistorian asks to what university they should apply for training in Andeanist ethnohistory, I am a bit stumped. It is possible to name places with strength in Andean ethnography, or Andean history, or at what US university one can learn Quechua or Aymara. But no doctoral program now stands out for ethnohistory *per se*. The explanation for that is complex, but boils down to a few key elements. US demography is one: the 'baby boom' generation of scholars who completed Ph.D.s in the 1970s and 1980s have scattered to the winds in a tight job market, while the shrinking of the student base -and of funding for education- has produced many fewer Ph.D.s in fields like anthropology and history since the 1990s. Another is the end of the Cold War, which translated not only into theoretical shifts -toward post-structuralist paradigms, particularly Foucault, Deleuze, and lately Agamben- and anthropology's move into the territory of modernity and globalization, but considerable reductions in governmental funding for interdisciplinary area studies. Those funds -Title VI- had been essential in building interdisciplinary strengths for regionally-focused research -via centers for Latin American and Caribbean studies. Such centers still exist, but without their former financial leverage to hire faculty in the disciplines.

A handful of joint doctoral programs in anthropology and history -at the University of Michigan, for instance- have kept this kind of interdisciplinary current flowing -though without much Andeanist emphasis-, but against a tide of disciplinary closure, especially within anthropology, which, still in flight from its condemnation as handmaiden of empire, and especially from its association with villages and ways of life that globalization theory deems to have disappeared, seems feverish in its search for new and emergent -and modern or postmodern- topics. The trend is also true among prospective students: very few over the sixteen years I have been located in NYU's anthropology department have sought to work with me on rural indigenous topics, and even fewer on ethnohistorical ones. And then there is competition among faculty: almost 400 applicants seek admission to NYU's doctoral program in anthropology every year, but we twenty-five or so faculty can admit fewer than ten per year, via ranking and consensus. Ethnohistory as a

proposed topic will not usually win the day in a department mainly focused on ethnographic methods.

In the end, academic ethnohistorians (myself among them), especially those housed in departments of anthropology, have not reproduced themselves, an exception to this generalization, which I cannot treat in any depth here, are the intrepid archaeologists who have chosen to work on the late pre-Columbian period, for whom Spanish documentary sources can be very important. Ethnohistory has fared far better in history departments, where neither the topic -located in the distant past- nor the research methods -archival work, etc.- raise any eyebrows. Were I to list the Ph.D.s in Andeanist ethnohistory since the beginning of this millennium, almost all would be in history. Of course, for the most part students in history are urged away from ethnographic fieldwork, and most do not have the opportunity for training in comparative ethnology.

Research Methods and Competence in Ethnography and History

The kind of ethnohistory that involves archival research and paleographic skills, that is, use of historical research methods, has always been something of a stretch for anthropology students trained mainly in ethnographic methods. No three year program of coursework is sufficient to acquire competence in two very different disciplines. In my own case, acquiring competence as a historian was done in piecemeal fashion and added years to my dissertation research and writing, and continued through postdoctoral projects involving a few years of research in the *Archivo de Indias*, the *Archivo General de la Nación de Argentina*, and the *Archivo y Biblioteca Nacionales de Bolivia*, among others. At an early stage -prior to my ethnographic fieldwork, in 1979- Tristan Platt took it upon himself to lead me through the Andean ethnohistory literature for several months -while I studied Aymara in La Paz. Without his kindness, I would likely not have entered the ethnohistorical fray. Ethnohistory for the anthropologist, that is, requires long-term dedication, luck in finding sources of funding for long-term study, and a lot of friends and colleagues from whom to learn. Were historians who focus on matters indigenous to decide to practice ethnography, they would likewise have to multiply and lengthen their apprenticeships. In practice, they usually do not. So the matter of acquiring research competence in both disciplines is a major hurdle for the reproduction of ethnohistory. Another constraint is the tendency of disciplines to, well, discipline themselves, to keep the gates closed to amateurs and to be suspicious of those who cross disciplinary lines. Of course, anthropologists could mimic the historians and skip the

interdisciplinarity: that would mean focusing on living people, and aiming to account for how the past is understood and knowledge of it transmitted within a contemporary indigenous community. I think, though, that such a project would not immediately be recognized as ethnohistory. And there lies another peculiarity of the practice.

The Ethno- of Ethnohistory

I follow with great interest Prof. Lorandi's treatment of the etymology and use of the first half of the compound term that is our focus: *ethno*: it is certainly derived from the Greek and used broadly to characterize some form of collective alterity vis-a-vis a majoritarian understanding of nation or nation-state of reference -in the US, it has been applied or appropriated by every immigrant population that has been distinguished from the English and creole-English people who constituted there, as did Spaniards and creole-Spaniards, the hegemonic elite of empire. Certainly, such alters were long anthropology's *métier*.

But there is another side to the *ethno-* of ethnohistory: as developed by US-based anthropology, adding the term *ethno* as prefix to some domain of the sciences or humanities, as in ethnobotany, ethnozoology, ethnopoetics, ethnomusicology, etc, one marked out for another 'culture and society' a domain of knowledge analogous to those of our own disciplinary domains. Ethnozoology, for instance, is some 'other' people's way of classifying and understanding animals. A brief example: Take the well-known dispute between Marvin Harris and Mary Douglas on how to understand God's prohibition of pork for ancient Israelites as commanded in the book of Leviticus. Harris provided a cultural materialist argument: Because of their water requirements -because of the lack of sweat glands to cool themselves- pigs were ill-suited to the desert nomadism of this pastoral people. Douglas, on the other hand, forwarded a structuralist interpretation: Motivating the extensive list in Leviticus of animals both permitted and prohibited is a system of classification -animals that 'divide the hoof' or not, 'chew the cud' (ruminant) or not, swim in the water with fins and scales, or not, etc. The permitted meats come from ruminant (grass-eating) animals with divided hooves -that is, two toes rather than one-, that is, from sheep, goats, and cattle. The pig is excluded not for material-practical reason, but for reason itself, since it has a divided hoof, but is not a ruminant. Its characteristics violate the said system of classification -as do, inversely, those of the also-prohibited horse, a ruminant with a single toe. Both are classed as abominable because they invoke contradiction in what we might call the ancient Israelites' zoology, which being very unlike

that of Linneaus -and thus *alter-*, we might call an ethnozoology. Certainly the clash of the resulting system of food prohibitions with the cuisine of pig-idolizing Christian Europe was a potent factor leading Christian Castillians or Frenchmen or Germans to classify Jews -and also Muslims- as radical alters of one kind (ethnic) or another (race).

With regard to the foregoing account of other ethno-hyphenated specialities, ethnohistory stands out. For the most part ethnohistory has been an effort to provide a narrative of the pasts of indigenous people who lacked written documents and historians to sift through them. Efforts to describe probable pre-Columbian social structures based on gleanings from colonial *visitas* certainly fall within the territory of ethnohistory. Ethnohistory has generally not meant, following the model of ethnozoology, ethnographic inquiry into the ways contemporary indigenous communities practice something analogous to history. If ethnohistory had developed more robustly in this direction, it would not have been appropriate by historians.

The -History of Ethnohistory, and -Collective or Social- Memory

What explains this strange divergence of ethnohistory from the path of ethnozoology? No doubt part of the answer is that historians, lamenting the Incas' lack of writing, abandoned the effort to write about Inca pasts -the presence of sources written by indigenous people in Nahuatl, for instance, was what drove James Lockhart to shift his attention from the Andes to Mexico. Where historians feared to tread, anthropologists rushed in. Once they did, they read chronicles, administrative reports, etc, and aimed to sift through the Spaniards' efforts to understand the Inca, using historians' tools to do so. A principal goal was to understand the Inca past and to describe the succession of reigns and events in a manner analogous to a Western event history. But anthropologists also brought with them another toolkit, that of comparative ethnology, making it possible to see past the ethnocentrism of 16th-century Spaniards to imagine ways that Incas and their past(s) were *not* analogous to the 'West'. Equipped with a broader set of concepts about the past and its remembrance -the kinds of social practices that Halbwachs called 'collective memory' - it became possible to appreciate the social functionality of possibly 'false' or at any rate non-empirically-verifiable event genealogies (myths), and perhaps to take seriously what might be called 'vernacular' history, how societies confront the past and the vicissitudes of time apart from narrow domain of writing and professional historians. Of course, a key move in recognizing vernacular history or social memory in 'other' societies -whether of the past or the present- is first to open our eyes to its continued presence

in our own lives, and certainly among 16th-century Spaniards, for whom a wide variety of embodied and practiced techniques of memory (recalling the ancestor *de solar conocido*, enlisting in *cofradías*, marching according to social rank in Corpus Christi processions, learning how to reproduce regional cuisine, marking out the day, week, month, and year -and the social space of *buena policia*- according to a cyclic repetition of Christology, not to speak of song and dance) accompanied notarial records and the multi-generational curriculum vitae of *relaciones*. Such recognition makes it easier to see in what ways certain Inca practices diverge from, as well as resemble, European understandings of 'history'.

The Culture Concept, Boundaries of Self and Other, and Ethnographic Theory

The search for Inca analogs of writing continues, as attests the special scrutiny of certain Inca practices, such as *taquies*, *kipus*, or *tocapus* - which some scholars have called 'writing without words', or 'alternative literacies' to sharpen both the analogy and the contradiction. But a broader and less historically-bound approach to the past may emerge directly from ethnohistorical practice, one that goes beyond documents and written narratives and treats, say, the use of surnames or the inheritance of property or, perhaps, drinking sessions accompanying festival sacrifices, as a kind of historical practice.

To understand what Spanish sources reveal to us about Incas, the ethnohistorian must have recourse to basic source criticism. That requires one to understand the sociocultural milieu of Spaniards who wrote chronicles and produced archives. Such an effort reveals that the colonial world very quickly became something new, attested neither in Castile nor in the pre-Columbian Andes. As Prof. Lorandi tells us, such discoveries led ethnohistorians -whether of the anthropologist or historian sort- to become interested in social process and change; to try to grasp the kinds of transformations to which indigenous societies -as well as Spanish ones- were subject in the colonial context. It also led to interests in urban society, in the genesis of '*indios criollos*', *mestizos*, *mulatos*, and the complex, gender driven production of new kinds of social positions previously unheard of. Practicing ethnohistory of this sort led its anthropologists to think about social process and change in ways for which 1970s models of culture and society had not prepared them. Structuralist approaches to culture assume a language-like closure that even language does not possess, while structural functionalist approaches assume that achieving stasis -through reproduction- is society's principal aim. Striving to

understand what might drive rural indigenous people called to the *mita* to transform themselves into '*indios criollos*' in a Potosí parish, and what kind of social and cultural forms were involved in such a transformation, requires a different way of understanding 'culture', one that does not assume closure and that is attuned to the shifting dynamics of power and the possibilities of resistance in a colonial context. Just as trying to understand how *taquies* might have served to anchor accounts of Inca pasts, thinking through the social positioning and motives for action of a colonial *indio criollo* demands attention to how situated interaction and performance construe and transform the webs of meaning called culture. In the end, reflexive attention to the dialogics of ethnographic practice seem much better suited for such analysis than the historian's approach to texts.

The concept of culture has indeed been appropriated by historians who continue to work the terrain of ethnohistory. But most often, it is a Saussurean understanding, whether drawn from Levi-Strauss or from the post- (but still) structuralist Foucault. What is of interest is the underlying (or overarching) meaning-paradigm, into which individuals are born and which they cannot hope to resist or transform. Mere *parole* (speech), for Saussure, is generally defective and non-productive in comparison to *langue* -language-as-a-system. As long as anthropologists have imagined 'culture' along such lines, as a coherent meaning system existing in abstract, intersubjective space, they have been very poor at accounting for how 'culture' is produced and changed, except for that externally imposed, as when one culture so conceived is displaced by another. Imagining Andean and Spanish cultural systems bumping up against one another like two relatively impermeable balloons makes it easy to account for continuity and resistance. But it obscures the dynamism that one sees best by regarding 'culture' as a product of social interaction.

In my own work, for example en *Caminos de la memoria y del poder* ([1998] 2006)¹, I have argued that the two distinct senses of 'ethnohistory', that involving historical methods and reconstruction of probable past event series based on empirical evidence, and that focused on understanding 'vernacular history' or social memory, the totality of techniques for 'recalling' or constructing a past suitable for present purposes, are two entirely different enterprises. One stems from the use of historical methods, and the other from anthropological ones. Of course, the two can be productively combined, by aiming to understand how Incas produced usable pasts via song and dance (*taquies*), or by enumerating the components of social units in the midst of acts of exchange (*quipus*). By widening ethnohistory's purview to include

¹ Publicado en Boliva en 2006, Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos/ Instituto de Estudios Bolivianos / ASDI. La primera edición es de 1988, en inglés.

efforts to understand how the past is constituted and used in the shaping of contemporary sociality, it may even be possible to imagine an ethnohistory of financial markets, science laboratories, and neoliberal globalization. It would be nice, however, if we could also continue to focus on indigenous peoples, rural or urban, past or present, in the countries linked by the chain of mountains called the Andes.