Unreliable Confessions: Khipus in the Colonial Parish

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The Americas, Volume 64, Number 1, July 2007, pp. 11-33 (Article)

Published by Cambridge University Press
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2007.0099*

The Americas
64:1 July 2007, 11-33

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Introduction: Tangled Confessions

The historiography of the book in the age of Spanish imperial expansionism has traditionally viewed printed works as repressive instruments of colonial domination that forcefully supplanted the native Americans' non-alphabetic vehicles of memory and communication. Accounts of the Europeans' wholesale destruction of native holy objects and material forms of expression bespeak the undisputable role of books in the Spanish colonization of indigenous memory and symbolizing practices.[1] But the existence of colonial-era writings that testify to the resiliency of native technologies poses still-unanswered questions about the mechanisms by which this colonization took place and the ultimate reach of print culture in local native communities removed from the urban centers where, as Ángel Rama has suggested, written documents held sway.[2] To what extent did native methods of communication endure under Spanish rule? What might the documentary traces of their use reveal about how they were transformed as a result of European contact? Can we tie their survival to concrete means by which native peoples withstood or adjusted to the Europeans' written culture and colonizing institutions? I would like to attempt to answer these

*Portions of this investigation were supported by awards from the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library of Yale University, the J. William Fulbright Foreign Scholarship Board, and a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities at the John Carter Brown Library. I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers at *The Americas* for their helpful comments and suggestions.

[1] Jack Goody, *The Domestication of the Savage Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977); Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1995). An oft-cited example of the link between the imposition of books and the advance of Spanish colonialism can be found in the actions of New Spain's first bishop, Juan de Zumárraga, who in his zeal to spread Christianity oversaw the establishment of the printing press in Mexico and the destruction of painted manuscripts in the Mesoamerican archive of Texcoco. See Hortensia Calvo, "The Historiography of the Book in Early Spanish America," in *Book History,* vol. 6, Ezra Greenspan and Jonathan Rose, eds., (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2003), p. 280.

[2] Ángel Rama, *La ciudad letrada* (Hanover, NH: Ediciones del Norte, 1984).

questions by focusing on missionary uses of Andean *khipus:* the knotted cords used by the Inca for the purposes of accounting and historical record keeping, which native parishioners employed in colonial times for learning Christian doctrine and recalling sins prior to confession.[3]

The khipu is one of the most enigmatic historical objects of pre-Columbian origin.[4] Early Spanish chroniclers of South America frequently marveled at the complex variety of information that the Incas stored on knotted cords and the reliability of these string devices for carrying out the business of imperial administration. But how the Incas were able to govern the vast empire of *Tawantinsuyu* without a European-style system of writing or accounting is a question that confounded Spanish observers of the colonial period and still confounds students of Andean history today. Since the pioneering studies of L. Leland Locke, and Marcia Ascher and Robert Ascher, which first explicated the intricate material structure and computational function of string records, uncovering the multiple types of information encoded in khipus has become a quest of vital interest to ethnographically-minded scholars of Andean studies.[5] In the past decade, feverish attempts have been made by historians and anthropologists to advance previous theories of Inca practices of accounting and to determine whether the khipu contained more than statistical records. Some of the provocative and culturally informed research in this vein posits that string registries also may have been capable of representing discursive modes or units of speech that could be "read" for meanings in ways similar to alphabetic writing systems.[6] Without prejudgment against such a possibility, the present study draws from alternative, pragmatic approaches to khipu studies that investigate the particular conditions and practices of semiotic pluralism in the colonial

[3] The most comprehensive surveys of colonial sources on khipu practices are Carlos Sempat Assadourian, "String Registries: Native Accounting and Memory According to the Colonial Sources," in Jeffrey Quilter and Gary Urton, eds., *Narrative Threads: Accounting and Recounting in Andean Khipu,* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2002), pp. 119-150; and Gary Urton, "An Overview of Spanish Colonial Commentary on Andean Knotted-String Records," in *Narrative Threads,* pp. 3-25.

[4] Margot Beyersdorff, "Writing without Words/Words without Writing: The Culture of the Khipu," *Latin American Research Review* 40:3 (2005), pp. 294-311; and Catherine J. Allen, "Knot-Words or Not Words," *Anthropological Quarterly* 78:4 (2005), pp. 981-996, outline the renewed interest in khipu culture in today's Andeanist scholarship, most notably that of the anthropologists Gary Urton and Frank Salomon.

[5] L. Leland Locke, *The Ancient Quipu, or Peruvian Knot Record* (New York: American Museum of Natural History, 1923); Marcia Ascher and Robert Ascher, *Code of the Quipu: A Study in Media, Mathematics, and Culture* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1981).

[6] Gary Urton, "From Knots to Narratives: Reconstructing the Art of Historical Record Keeping in the Andes from Spanish Transcriptions of Inka *Khipus," Ethnohistory* 45:3 (1998), pp. 409-438. Quilter and Urton's edited volume *Narrative Threads* reunites studies by scholars of various disciplines that question the theory that khipus recorded only numerical information.

Andes and what the documentary sources of the colonial period reveal about the khipus' capacity for recording social action in rural parish settings.[7]

My inquiry begins with a vivid historical testimony on khipu practices in the parish of Andahuaylillas, in the southern Peruvian diocese of Cuzco, taken from a bilingual Spanish-Quechua manual for administering the sacraments to native Andeans, the *Ritual formulario e institución de curas,* published in Lima in 1631.[8] The manual's author, the local priest Juan Pérez Bocanegra, included in his work a caution to his readers about the dangers of allowing parishioners to confess using knotted strings. He explained that with these cords—or "tangles for their souls" *(enredos para sus almas)*—the Andean proselytes of his parish had turned confession into a collective, disorderly affair; they falsified khipu, exchanged them freely amongst themselves, confessed to sins they did not commit, while failing to declare others they did:

> As a result, they do not know what they are confessing or saying, and they confuse the confessor, in judging and absolving, and I have found they keep such knots for future confessions, though they confess shortly thereafter or another year. They also lend them out to those who need to repeat their confession, . . . [thus] entangling themselves, with these khipus and memory aids, in countless errors.[9]

What concerned him, aside from the breakdown in communication that khipus caused between confessors and penitents, was the fact that cord keeping was practiced outside the clergy's surveillance, allowing the specialists who prepared the registries with which Andean neophytes confessed to advance teachings incompatible with Catholic orthodoxy.

[7] Frank Salomon, *The Cord Keepers: Khipus and Cultural Life in a Peruvian Village* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004); Juan Carlos Estenssoro Fuchs, *Del paganismo a la santidad: La incorporación de los indios del Perú al catolicismo, 1532-1750,* trans. Gabriela Ramos (Lima: Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2003), especially pp. 223-228; and Kathryn Burns, "Making Indigenous Archives: The Quilcay Camayoc of Colonial Cuzco," a talk presented at the Latin American Library of Tulane University, New Orleans, LA, April 6, 2005, examine the ethnographic contexts in which knotted cords survived and operated alongside written documents and the import of khipu-sharing communities on the workings of the "lettered city." My appreciation is owed to Kathryn Burns for generously sharing with me her unpublished research.

[8] Juan Pérez Bocanegra, *Ritual formulario e institución de curas* (Lima: Geronymo de Contreras, 1631).

[9] "Demanera, que no saben lo que se confiessan, ni dizen, y ponen al Confessor en confusion, assi juzgando, como absoluiendo: y é hallado, que guardan semejantes ñudos, para otra confession, aunque la hagan de breue tiempo, ó para otro año. Y que los prestan, y dan a los que se an de confessar de nueuo,… [e]nredandose en millares de errores, con estos quipos, y memorias." Pérez Bocanegra, *Ritual formulario,* pp. 112-113. All English translations of Spanish texts are my own unless otherwise indicated.

Father Pérez Bocanegra focused his criticisms on the suspect credibility of khipus and those who fashioned them, but he did not mention the Church's position on the role of knotted strings in parish life, the signifying properties that made them amenable or hostile to clerical efforts, or the historical and legal contexts that gave shape to the contentious Andean-priest interactions his work described. In their respective investigations of the *Ritual formulario,* Juan Carlos Estenssoro Fuchs and Regina Harrison have properly identified the cloud of heterodoxy that enveloped khipus and their handlers at the time of the manual's publication, which partially explains the priest's hostile reaction to their use in Catholic ritual.[10] My aim is to augment these findings by proposing an alternative source for assessing the clergy's attacks on the veracity of string records and the individuals responsible for their preservation: ecclesiastical court proceedings in which khipu registries served as evidence of clerical abuses. To grasp more fully the development of such legal practices, I shall consider first how khipus functioned initially with the Church's approval as devices for learning doctrine and making confession.

EARLY MISSIONARY ASSESSMENTS OF NATIVE STRING REGISTRIES

In contrast to Pérez Bocanegra's sharp criticisms, early European accounts generally described khipus favorably, as tools that might assist in making Catholic teachings meaningful from an indigenous cultural perspective. For instance, the Jesuit historian José de Acosta marveled at how the Andean peoples, who had no knowledge of writing until the arrival of the Spanish, had managed to preserve their ancient traditions so faithfully without the aid of alphabetic script. He expressed no doubt that Andeans, though deprived of letters, had developed by string registries a system of communicating history that matched the effectiveness of writing itself: "For all that books can tell us about histories, laws, ceremonies, and administrative accounts, khipus substitute so well that it provokes wonder."[11] This method of recollection, he continued, was exemplified in the *khipukamayuq,* native American precursor of the Spanish Empire's "public scribe" *(escribano público),* who shared his official record with the Inca and to whom all faith in state affairs was given. They were, for many of Acosta's contemporaries, the indispensable keepers of regional accounts as well as the Inca's imperial

[10] Regina Harrison, "Pérez Bocanegra's *Ritual formulario:* Khipu Knots and Confession," in *Narrative Threads,* pp. 266-290; Estenssoro Fuchs, *Del paganismo a la santidad,* pp. 223-227.

[11] "...cuanto los libros pueden decir de historias, y leyes y ceremonias, y cuentas de negocios, todo eso suplen los quipos tan puntualmente, que admira." José de Acosta, *Historia natural y moral de las Indias* [1590], ed. José Alcina Franch (Madrid: Dastin, 2002), p. 385.

"archive," maintaining for posterity vital information on matters ranging from population figures and livestock records to local sacred laws and the royal chronicles of war and peace.[12]

But colonial evangelizers took far more than an antiquarian interest in the Andeans' knotted cord records and the stories their handlers told. Because the missionary Church lacked sufficient numbers of ordained personnel, above all during the early decades of evangelization, the lion's share of day-to-day parish administration and community policing fell to local Andean authorities, including those educated in khipu accounting methods. Consider Friar Diego de Porres's 1560 instruction for parish governance, which posited cord registries as a vital resource of native church officials when directed to the goals of ecclesiastical governance.[13] With this directive, the future provincial of the Mercedarian order in Peru intended to offer missionaries a guide for implementing the decrees of the First Provincial Council of Lima (1551-1552) with regard to native religious instruction and parish administration. First priority of newly appointed priests, he argued, was to announce the synod's laws before the congregated village and to have the local ethnic lord record them in writing and khipu "so that the Indians not feign ignorance of their [spiritual] obligations."[14] These registries were also to maintain crucial statistics sought by the *visitas,* or ecclesiastical inspection teams, such as the community's assets and tributary contributions, absences for Mass or catechism, baptismal and other sacramental records, and celebration of liturgical feasts.[15] Lastly, Porres saw the potential value of cords for teaching the catechism. He instructed priests to require their parishioners to make khipus for learning the basic prayers (Our Father, Hail Mary, Apostles' Creed, and Salve Regina) and Ten Commandments, the presumption being that khipus could store meanings of religious concepts and assist in the oral recitation of

[12] Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, *El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno* [1615/1616], eds. John V. Murra and Rolena Adorno, Quechua trans. Jorge L. Urioste (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno, 1980), p. 361; Martín de Murúa, *Códice Murúa: Historia y genealogía, de los reyes Incas del Perú del padre mercedario Fray Martín de Murúa* [1590], ed. Juan Ossio (Madrid: Testimonio Compañía Editorial, 2004), f. 77v.

[13] Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Patronato, 231. Estenssoro Fuchs, *Del paganismo a la santidad,* p. 217; and Sempat Assadourian, "String Registries," pp. 136-137, alerted me to the existence of Porres's manuscript among the holdings of Spain's Archivo General de Indias.

[14] "...darselo por quipo al caçique porque no pretendan ygnorançia de lo que alli les obliga y manda." AGI, Patronato, 231 ff., 1r, 3r.

[15] AGI, Patronato, 231 ff., 5r-7v. Friar Martín de Murúa's 1590 history of the Incas confirms that khipus were used in this way. Murúa recalls encountering a *curaca* (Andean ethnic lord) in the parish of Capachica, who at the behest of a Mercedarian had dutifully retained on his cords the rules of the Church and the saints' days of the holy calendar, recalling them so effectively "as if by paper and ink." Murúa, *Códice Murúa,* f. 77v.

prayers.[16] Numerous ecclesiastical testimonies of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries praise their usefulness in helping native students commit religious lessons to memory and inspiring in them a newfound Catholic fervor. The following Jesuit correspondence of 1609 from the central mountain province of Huarochirí exemplifies this attitude: "All was about making khipus for confessing and learning what they didn't know about the catechism, and [with them] everyone confessed, fasted, disciplined themselves, and generally attended to the salvation of their souls."[17]

CONFESSIONAL KHIPUS AT THE THIRD PROVINCIAL COUNCIL OF LIMA (1582-1583)

In the decades leading up to and following the Jesuit-dominated Third Provincial Council of Lima (1582-1583), khipus appear to have reached broad acceptance as a mnemonic aid for learning prayers and recalling sins prior to confession. As Estenssoro has documented, the close attention that Jesuit writers paid to the Andeans' performance in confession evidences an overriding belief in the Society of Jesus that the systematic observance of the sacrament was critical to the salvation of indigenous converts.[18] Ritual confession and penitential discipline fundamentally defined Jesuit charism in opposition to preceding missionary approaches in Peru, such as that of the Dominicans, for whom confession was indispensable only in the case of mortal sin. The indigenous chronicler Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, an outspoken enthusiast of Jesuit pedagogy, held that it was the duty of Andean church personnel to teach penitents how to confess by means of cords: "Each Indian should make a khipu of his or her sins, and the Indian man and the Indian woman should be taught how one ought to confess each sin."[19] A

[16] "...dalles las quatro oraçiones que son obligados a sauer, y mandamientos, por quipo, asi como lo rrezan por sus pausas, y silauas, y mandalles que ningun yndio biejo ni muchacho ande sin el tal quipo para que por alli sepan las dichas oraçiones y que siempre lo traigan consigo doquiera que fueren, aunque vayan afuera de sus tierras, para que tengan rregla de xpianos, y den rrazones de las dichas oraçiones donde se las preguntaren, y lo que cada oraçion quiere dezir." AGI, Patronato, 231 f., 2r.

[17] "Todo era hazer quipos p.q confessarse aprender lo q. no sabian de la doctr.a confessarse, ayunar, y disciplinarse, y generalm.te attender cada vno ala saluacion de sus almas." Transcribed in Mario Polia Meconi, ed., *La cosmovisión religiosa andina en los documentos inéditos del Archivo Romano de la Compañía de Jesús (1581-1752)* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1999), p. 273. Similar Jesuit testimonies of confessional khipu practices are located in Antonio de Egaña, ed., *Monumenta Peruana,* vol. 2 (Rome: Monumenta Historica Societatis Iesu, 1958), pp. 252, 262; and Francisco Mateos, ed., *Historia general de la Compañía de Jesús en la provincia del Perú* [1600], vol. 2 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1944), pp. 101, 128.

[18] Estenssoro Fuchs, *Del paganismo a la santidad,* pp. 206-208.

[19] "Y el yndio haga quipo de sus pecados. Y al yndio y a la yndia le enseñe cómo lo a de confesarse de cada pecado." Guaman Poma, *El primer nueva corónica,* p. 630.

pathway of authority was thus open to native khipu specialists who presided over local religious instruction and elucidated for neophytes the subtle distinctions between mortal and venial sins.

But how, precisely, was confession with khipus to have taken place? Estenssoro and Harrison have located partial answers in the *Tercero catecismo y exposición de la doctrina christiana por sermones* (1585), the trilingual sermon collection that was published by instruction of the Third Council for use in Andean parishes.[20] The volume's 12th sermon, devoted to the reconciliation sacrament, proposed the language with which priests should instruct the Andean penitent on how to prepare for confession:

> First, my son, you must reflect earnestly upon your sins, and make a khipu of them, just as when you are a storekeeper (tambocamayo) you make a khipu of what you give and what you are owed. Make thus a khipu of what you have done against God and your neighbor, and how many times, if many or few. . . . After having examined yourself and made a khipu of your sins by way of the Ten Commandments, or as best you know, you must ask God's pardon with great sorrow for having offended Him.[21]

In ways that paralleled traditional Andean methods of storehouse inventory, confessional khipus recorded the quantity and value of the sinner's credits and debts. This arithmetic function of knotted strings proved especially valuable for a sacramental rite whose integrity rested upon the accurate recall of transgressions and their frequency. Furthermore, penitents were instructed to examine their conscience following the sequence of the Ten Commandments, maintaining the procedure for confessing neophytes outlined in printed confession manuals of the period, including the *Confessionario para los curas de indios* (1585), which was also commissioned by the Third Council.[22] A decimal-based accounting system, as complex khipu numerology has been described by modern specialists,[23] would thus appear to have been ideally suited for the effective recollection of God's basic pre-

[20] Estenssoro Fuchs, *Del paganismo a la santidad,* p. 221; Harrison, "Pérez Bocanegra's *Ritual formulario,"* p. 268.

[21] "Lo primero, hijo mio, has de pensar bien tus peccados, y hazer quipo dellos: como hazes quipo, quando eres tambo camayo, de lo que das, y de lo que te deuen: assi haz quipo de lo que has hecho, contra Dios y contra tu proximo, y quantas vezes: si muchas, o si pocas…. Despues de auerte pesado, y hecho quippo de tus peccados por los diez mandamientos, o como mejor supieres, has de pedir a Dios perdon con mucho dolor de auelle offendido." *Tercero catecismo y exposición de la doctrina christiana por sermones* [1585], in *Doctrina christiana y catecismo para instrucción de indios* [1584], ed. Luciano Pereña (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1985), pp. 482-483. English translation is mine in consultation with Harrison, "Pérez Bocanegra's *Ritual formulario,"* p. 268.

[22] *Confessionario para los curas de indios* [1585], in *Doctrina christiana,* pp. 189-332.

[23] Locke, *The Ancient Quipu;* Ascher and Ascher, *Code of the Quipu.*

cepts and one's violations of them. One can also presume that knotted strings offered Quechua-speaking Andeans, untrained in alphabetic literacy, a visual and tactile mode of accounting and expression that was more easily comprehensible and adaptable to traditional signifying practices, as was the case of native Mexican penitents who used handmade drawings to communicate with their confessors.[24] From a clerical perspective, khipus solved many of the intractable problems of evangelizing in a landscape marked by severe linguistic variation, where the spread of Castilian remained negligible in highland villages and problems of communication persisted.

Yet shortcomings in the Church's instructional methodologies came to the fore when missionary priests began to suspect that khipus did not always reinforce orthodoxy or sound communication but instead created alternative meanings and patterns of social action in spheres independent of Spanish religious authority. Turning to the Third Council's official legislation, we see that despite the *sermonario's* ostensible backing of confessional string records, the presiding bishops set out a program to suppress khipus due to the local acclaim they had achieved at the expense of books. Citing the idolatrous cultural memory that cord records sustained, chapter 35 of the council's third session ordered them to be confiscated in dioceses throughout the viceroyalty, lest they undermine further the goals of conversion:[25]

> because in place of the books, the Indians have used and continue to use ones like registers made of different threads, which they call khipus, and with them they preserve the memory of their ancient superstition and rites and ceremonies and perverse customs, let the bishops act with diligence so that all the memory aids or khipus that nourish their superstition be taken away completely from the Indians.[26]

The simultaneous advocacy of khipus, on the one hand, and call for their universal destruction, on the other, underscores a fissure among participants of the Third Council with regard to the place of traditional Andean cult objects in the evangelization program. Viable channels for inculcating Christian devo-

[24] Estenssoro Fuchs, *Del paganismo a la santidad,* p. 221; Osvaldo F. Pardo, *The Origins of Mexican Catholicism: Nahua Rituals and Christian Sacraments in Sixteenth-Century Mexico* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004), p. 106.

[25] Harrison, "Pérez Bocanegra's *Ritual formulario*," pp. 268-269.

[26] "porque en lugar de los libros los yndios han usado y usan unos como registros hechos de diferentes hilos, que ellos llaman quipos, y con estos conservan la memoria de su antigua superstición y ritos y ceremonias y costumbres perversas; procuren con diligencia los obispos que todos los memoriales o quipos, que sirven para su superstición, se les quiten totalmente a los yndios." Lima III, actio 3, cap. 37, in Rubén Vargas Ugarte, *Concilios Limenses (1551-1772),* vol. 1 (Lima: Tipografía Peruana, 1951), p. 358. My translation closely follows that of Harrison, "Pérez Bocanegra's *Ritual formulario*," p. 269.

tions were desired, but for some of the prelacy this came at the risk of perpetuating pre-Christian ideas and practices antithetical to church teachings.

Cord records had attained considerable power in the ceremonial production of religious authority, and from an ecclesiastical point of view this authority was increasingly non-Catholic. European writers alleged that some khipu specialists operated covertly in response to the hard-line position against pre-Hispanic cults, many of which practiced customs of atonement that closely patterned orthodox ritual forms.[27] However, such official directives that sought to marginalize indigenous offenders from the supposedly more compliant native populace obscure what Kenneth Mills has identified as the widespread and continually evolving religious and cultural reformulations that characterized Andean parish life.[28] Generally speaking, native parishioners exercised considerable independence from ecclesiastical authority and often cultivated ritual practices and relationships with holy objects and personalities that were deemed suspect by the church hierarchy. It was not uncommon for baptized Andeans to "self-Christianize"—to recast the codes of conduct imposed upon them and redefine the standards of proper religious belief and custom according to their own terms and expectations. With regard to the ritual of confession, the distance that emerged between authorized Catholic teachings and local practices suggests a dynamic pastoral environment of cultural selections and substitutions, and forms of worship that could be at times both analogous and conflicting.

The bishops of the Third Council condemned openly the ritual khipu practices that were conducted outside clerical supervision. But the autonomy of specialists who mediated the confessional rites within the Church may also have motivated the push for sacramental reform. Given the widespread linguistic deficiency among the clergy, native church assistants had considerable authority in local parishes as language interpreters and teachers of doctrine. Though the Second Council of Lima (1567) and Arequipa synod (1638) banned third parties from the confessional,[29] this rule was widely disregarded in the practice of rural parish life, as Pérez Bocanegra's testimony makes

[27] Estenssoro Fuchs, *Del paganismo a la santidad,* p. 210; Juan Polo de Ondegardo, "Instrucción contra las ceremonias y ritos que usan los indios conforme al tiempo de su infidelidad" [1559], *Revista Histórica* 1:1 (1906), p. 202.

[28] Kenneth Mills, "Bad Christians in Colonial Peru," *Colonial Latin American Review* 5:2 (1996), pp. 185-186; Kenneth Mills, "The Naturalisation of Andean Christianities," in *The Cambridge History of Christianity,* Vol. 6, *Reformation and Expansion, c. 1500-c. 1660,* ed. R. Po-Chia Hsia (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 508-539.

[29] Lima II, españoles 13, in Vargas Ugarte, *Concilios Limenses,* p. 108; Lima II, indios 49, in Vargas Ugarte, *Concilios Limenses,* pp. 182-183; Arequipa 1638, Lib. II, tit. 4, cap. 6, in Biblioteca Nacional del Perú (BNP), B 1742, f. 128v.

plain. Church legislation subsequent to the ban frequently mentioned, albeit with reservations, the important service of native assistants in the confessional, particularly in the diocese of Cuzco under whose jurisdiction Andahuaylillas fell.[30] In the diocese of Quito, the clergy was encouraged to seek the help of indigenous bilinguals when necessary for hearing confessions.[31] While the *Tercero catecismo* advocated khipu-based confessions, the work's authors made no explicit provision for the involvement of native intermediaries in the sacramental rite. The legislation of the Third Council stressed, however, that not all priests were suitable for confessing new converts, which suggests there existed an averse but ongoing demand for Andean interpreters.[32] In his *De procuranda indorum salute* (1577), the definitive treatise on pastoral governance in early colonial Peru, Father Acosta, a principal advisor to the Third Council, reluctantly acknowledged that interpreters could be recruited for the confessional, but he insisted this take place only in extreme cases in which the priest lacked sufficient language skills to understand the gravest of sins.[33]

What preoccupied the clergy, beyond the obstacles that accompanied the linguistic translation of a penitent's auricular confession, was the alleged treachery of Andean interpreters and the claims they made about khipus. For instance, Pérez Bocanegra's manual included questions that priests should model when interrogating Andeans who assisted the sacrament. Did the interpreters violate the confidentiality and sanctity of the confessional by divulging what was said to third parties? Was this done to harm the penitent's reputation or his or her estate? How many people were told and how many times?[34] A final query points to the author's suspicions that they willfully falsified the knotted cord accounts of the neophytes under their charge: "When finding khipus, on which an Indian man or woman of your acquaintance had knotted their sins in order to recall their confession, did you look at them or make up the sins they committed by manipulating the colors of the knots? Did you then divulge or tell them to someone, causing the Indian man or woman notable dishonor for having told?"[35] Such queries suggest

[30] Cuzco 1591, cap. 4, in BNP, A 568, ff. 4r-4v.

[31] Alonso de la Peña Montenegro, *Itinerario para párrocos de indios, en que se tratan las materias mas particulares tocantes a ellos para su buena administración* [1668] (Guayaquil: Ediciones Corporación de Estudios y Publicaciones, 1985), pp. 319-320.

[32] Lima III, actio 2, cap. 14, in Vargas Ugarte, *Concilios Limenses,* pp. 270-271.

[33] José de Acosta, *De procuranda indorum salute* [1577], vol. 2 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1987), pp. 52-59, 430-433.

[34] Pérez Bocanegra, *Ritual formulario,* pp. 340-341.

[35] "Hallando quipos, donde algun indio, ó india que tu conoces, auia añudado sus pecados, para memoria de su confession, as los mirado, y por las colores de los ñudos, as fabricado los pecados que hizieron, y diuulgastelos, ú dixistelos a alguna persona? y dime por auerlo tu dicho siguiosele al indio, ó

the power these individuals had to manipulate assets, defame characters, and generally disrupt the already tenuous grip that priests maintained on local affairs. To understand better how they might have accomplished this, I would now like to turn to the topic of indigenous legal activism.

LEGAL USES OF KHIPUS IN ANDEAN PARISHES

Throughout the colonial period, Andeans familiarized with Hispanic language and juridical procedure filed legal complaints against priests before ecclesiastical magistrates, in diocesan tribunals or in makeshift courts established in the conduct of parish inspections. As in Spain, the Catholic courts of Peru ruled on wide-ranging matters of canon law pertaining to benefices, tithes, sacraments, marital disputes, and criminal charges of pastoral negligence.[36] The accusations of indigenous plaintiffs within a single legal action, or *causa de capítulos,* focused principally on three types of ministerial abuse—economic exploitation, immoral behavior, and spiritual neglect—and on occasion khipus formed part of the evidentiary record. Echoing the concerns expressed by Acosta about the abuses of clerical authority that hindered pastoral achievement,[37] native activists appealed to the church magistrates' sense of justice to redress the wrongs they saw and experienced at the hands of their parish priests. Indications also exist that the Lima see's campaigns to eradicate suspect Andean religiosity, which began systematically in the first decade of the seventeenth century, provided a fertile breeding ground for the exchange of reciprocal accusations between priests and native authorities who competed for political and spiritual authority in local communities. Indigenous lawsuits emerged from the same idolatry trial complex that persecuted traditional Andean beliefs and rituals; in many parishes, charges against priests for moral and material transgressions were preceded or followed by the Church's prosecution of the native worshippers' alleged religious crimes. What Mills has termed the "atmosphere of mutual scrutiny and sense-making"[38] that characterized parish relations thus pro-

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india, infamia notable?" Pérez Bocanegra, *Ritual formulario,* p. 341. The charge of indiscretion made against interpreters of the sacrament was at times turned against the clergy itself. In the central highland parish of Ambar, at the time when Pérez Bocanegra wrote his manual, the Andean ethnic lords legally accused their parish priest of publicizing the private matters of penitents in his weekly sermon address: "[el padre] no a empesado a confesar la gente aunque no abra muchos que confiese con el por rrebelar la confiçion en su conbersasion y Platica y sermon y esto y otras muchas cosas grabes." Archivo Arzobispal de Lima (AAL), Capítulos, Leg. 6, Exp. 4, f. 3r.

[36] Richard L. Kagan, *Lawsuits and Litigation in Castile, 1500-1700* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1981), pp. 33-34.

[37] José de Acosta, *De procuranda indorum salute* [1577], vol. 1 (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas, 1984), pp. 204-207.

[38] Mills, "Bad Christians," p. 185.

vides a necessary context for approaching the case studies that follow, in which native litigants turned to the power of written documents and string registries, and a blended Andean and Catholic morality, to denounce the instances of priestly corruption in their midst.

Antonio Acosta Rodríguez, and more recently Frank Salomon and Karen Spalding, have painted for the first colonial period a compelling picture of the formidable power base that activist cord masters created for themselves in Huarochirí to defend the interests of their welfare against Spanish colonialism's advance.[39] A well-documented flashpoint of Spanish-Andean tensions for that region occurred in 1607 in the village of San Damián, where the native leaders famously accused the abusive priest Francisco de Ávila of fiscally exploiting the indigenous workforce.[40] Don Martín Puiporosi, the ethnic lord of the nearby village of Santiago de Tuna, initiated the charges on behalf of the parishioners, and to substantiate them before the *visitador* Baltazar de Padilla, he recruited a local khipukamayuq to corroborate the prosecution's case. Puiporosi claimed that Ávila's theft of goods and services from the local church, including foodstuffs, livestock, and the outstanding wages of tributary Indians, could be verified on the strings of the indigenous accountant's khipu registry.[41] After a protracted litigation of two years, Ávila was exonerated and released from jail, which prompted his renowned career on the trail of extirpation and the filing of accusations of idolatry against his previous courtroom adversaries.[42] Despite the plaintiffs' legal defeat, Andean string registries continued to play a key evidentiary role in the making of indigenous complaints against the missionary clergy of Huarochirí. In 1622, Don Francisco Muchay and Don Juan Vilca, the Andean notables of San Francisco de Chaclla, filed a legal claim for restitution against the licentiate Luis Mejía, who they alleged had participated in a series of economic abuses and moral scandals in his first 12 months as

[39] Antonio Acosta Rodríguez, "El pleito de los indios de San Damián (Huarochirí) contra Francisco de Ávila, 1607," *Historiografía y bibliografía americanistas* 23 (1979), pp. 3-33; Antonio Acosta Rodríguez, "Francisco de Ávila: Cusco 1573 (?)-Lima 1647," in *Ritos y tradiciones de Huarochirí*, ed. and trans. Gerald Taylor (Lima: Instituto de Estudios Peruanos, Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos, 1987), pp. 551-616; Frank Salomon and Karen Spalding, "Cartas atadas con quipus: Sebastián Francisco de Melo, María Micaela Chinchano y la repression de la rebelión de Huarochirí de 1750," in *El hombre y los Andes: Homenaje a Franklin Pease G.Y.*, eds. Javier Flores Espinoza and Rafael Varón Gabai, vol. 2 (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2002), pp. 857-870; Salomon, *The Cord Keepers*, pp. 114-120.

[40] Acosta Rodríguez, "El pleito de los indios de San Damián," pp. 3-10; Acosta Rodríguez, "Francisco de Ávila," pp. 571-575; Salomon, *The Cord Keepers,* pp. 118-120.

[41] "...esta quenta la tiene el yndio contador destos pueblos en su quipo." AAL, Capítulos, Leg. 1, Exp. 9, f. 3r.

[42] Acosta Rodríguez, "El pleito de los indios de San Damián," pp. 5-10; Acosta Rodríguez, "Francisco de Ávila," pp. 593-606.

curate. According to the indictment, the priest had stolen community animals and provisions without authorization, failed to pay native laborers for services rendered to the maintenance of the church, consorted with women, and generally neglected his sacramental responsibility to baptize infants and confess the infirm. Vilca included himself among the priest's victims, which indicates the personal animosities that likely motivated the complaint; when a mule belonging to the parish died under the noble lord's watch, Mejía forced him to reimburse the church the unfair sum of 18 goats from his own private stock. Yet as before, the local administrators who suffered the abuse claimed to possess knotted string accounts that proved Mejía's graft:

> The said priest forces the said Indians of this parish and its administrators to give him hens, chickens, potatoes, cocopa, and corn, claiming that is what the tribute quota list orders them to give, and he imposes this upon the administrators of the settlements, and if they do not comply, he orders them to be punished severely, and for this, the said priest must pay them a large amount of silver in restitution, as their khipus will prove.[43]

It appears that the evidentiary cords registered mostly statistical information such as the types of products and the quantities exchanged, and the sums of restitution and to whom it was owed.[44]

But the actual extent of the admissibility of khipus in the seventeenth-century courtroom is difficult to assess. Spanish colonial law referred only indirectly to their validity as evidence and the final resolution of most legal proceedings of this type, including the causas against Mejía, unfortunately remain lost from the archival record. We know that in the earliest colonial era, royal authorities demanded that Andean cord masters keep specific types of cord information for purposes of verification. The masters' khipu figures were needed not only to inform Spanish officials of available tributary goods and labor, but also to ensure for the Andeans' protection that their forced payments and services did not exceed the Crown's expectations.[45] This practice was endorsed by Viceroy Francisco de Toledo, who in

[43] "El dho cura apremia a los dhos yn.os desta su doctrina y a sus mandones a que le den gallinas pollos papas cocopa maiz diziendo que la tasa se lo manda dar forcando a los mandones de las parcialidades y si no lo hazen los manda castigar cruelmente de que desto el dho cura les deue restituyr mucha plata como constara por los quipos que tienen." AAL, Capítulos, Leg. 3, Exp. 11, f. 4r.

[44] The litigants' statements about the priest's moral and sacramental failings, however, made no reference to khipus. This suggests the possibility that cord records of baptisms, confessions, saints' days, or other crucial data on local ritual activities, which Porres had recommended for an earlier time, no longer monitored and memorialized the daily parish life of seventeenth-century Huarochirí.

[45] Carmen Beatriz Loza, "Du bon usage des *quipus* face à l'administration coloniale espagnole (1550-1600)," *Population* 53:1-2 (1998), p. 144; Salomon, *The Cord Keepers,* p. 110.

his legal reforms of the 1570s sought to utilize string registries in the service of colonial administration. Andean laborers, he decreed, should carry khipus as testimony to defend themselves against the exploitative schemes of tribute collectors: "the said corregidor must give orders that each Indian of those who are subject to tribute carry his khipu of what he ought to pay so that [the royal administrators] understand they are not to take more tribute [than is required]."[46] Toledo's reforms also ordered khipu specialists to help Spanish judges receive Andean complaints of lost wealth,[47] which probably entailed substantiating property inventories before the court. In this way, the viceroy slightly adapted the proposal of the jurist Juan de Matienzo for the adjudication of indigenous disputes by the cord-keeping *t'uqrikyuq.* In Matienzo's vision, this native official would record by khipu the data related to "any civil and criminal grievances that occur between Indians, together with the lawsuits that the Indians might bring through their caciques or notables, be they civil or criminal," in addition to details of the sentence rendered.[48]

The most direct legal precedent for the actions of cord keepers against the clergy can be found among the duties that Toledo set down for the notary-khipukamayuq, a central authority of the indigenous municipal councils he established for each administrative district. A more highly literate embodiment of Matienzo's t'uqrikyuq, this individual was expected to transfer into written documents all witness testimony that came before the council on matters of wills, property inventories, or legal complaints, plus relevant khipu data on the activities of *corregidores,* Andean parishioners, and priests:

> all the remaining information that the Indians customarily record on khipus must be reduced to writing by the hand of said notary so that it be more certain and durable, especially with regard to the [parishioners'] absences from doctrina and the comings and goings of priests and their absences, and the

[46] "...que el dho corregidor de orden que cada yndio de los que ffueren de tassa tome su quipo de lo que ouiere de pagar prq. entiendan q. no se les a de llevar mas tassa." Archivo General de la Nación (Lima), Derecho Indígena, Leg. 31, Cuaderno 617, f. 10r.

[47] Salomon, *The Cord Keepers,* p. 111. Tristan Platt, "'Without Deceit or Lies': Variable *Chinu* Readings during a Sixteenth-Century Tribute-Restitution Trial," in *Narrative Threads,* pp. 225-265; and Mónica Medelius and José Carlos de la Puente Luna, "Curacas, bienes y quipus en un documento toledano (Jauja, 1570)," *Histórica* 28:2 (2004), pp. 35-82, document and analyze the employment of khipus by native litigants in tribute-restitution trials of the sixteenth century.

[48] "...cualesquier pleitos civiles y criminales que acaecieren entre indios, con que las causas que los indios truxeran con sus caciques o principales, ceviles o criminales, las ponga por quipo el tocuirico." Juan de Matienzo, *Gobierno del Perú* [1567], ed. Guillermo Lohmann Villena (Lima: Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos, 1967), p. 51.

> same applies to the corregidores and their lieutenants, and other particular matters that they tend to record on the said khipus.[49]

As Kathryn Burns interprets this ordinance, Toledo astutely turned the cord keeper into a "kind of moral policeman,"[50] much as we saw in Diego de Porres's early projection of native parish governance. But here it was not only the Andeans but also the Spanish priests and corregidores who fell under the watchful eye of the khipukamayuq, a sanctioned ally of royal authorities for weeding out corruption in their own ranks.[51]

Scholars have generally asserted that by the last decade of the sixteenth century written documents in Spanish had effectively replaced Peruvian cord registries as the only legally recognized means of record keeping.[52] According to Salomon and Spalding, the khipu registry continued informally subsequent to the ascendancy of paper accounts, but surfaced mostly in "folk-legal proceedings," like the trial of Francisco de Ávila, and reflected more the indigenous peoples' support for their validity than any official Spanish endorsement.[53] However, parish inspection reports of the Lima archbishopric produced some fifty years after Toledo's ordinances confirm that some ecclesiastical authorities solicited legally binding cord accounts from Andean parishioners well into first half of the seventeenth century. When, in 1619, the ethnic lords of the parish of Andajes in the central highland province of Cajatambo filed capítulos against the Mercedarian friar Miguel Márquez, the high clergy of Lima dispatched the visitador Cristóbal Loarte Dávila to investigate. The inspector posed a set of 26 questions to the native witnesses concerning Márquez's alleged mistreatment of laborers, illicit moneymaking, and total inatten-

[49] "...todo lo demás que se pudiere, que los indios suelen poner en Quipos, se ordena y manda que se reduzca á escritura por mano de dicho escribano, para que sea más cierto y durable, en especial en las faltas que tuvieren de doctrina y entradas y salidas de sacerdotes y ausencias que hicieren, y lo mismo en lo que tocare a los correjidores y sus tenientes y otras cosas particulares, que ellos suelen asentar en los dichos Quipos." Transcribed in Roberto Levillier, ed., *Gobernantes del Perú: Cartas y papeles, siglo XVI,* vol. 8 (Madrid: Sucesores de Rivadeneyra, 1925), pp. 337-338; this passage is cited and translated from the Spanish in Kathryn Burns, "Making Indigenous Archives," p. 10.

[50] Burns, "Making Indigenous Archives," p. 11.

[51] The ongoing research of Burns on the power of indigenous scribes to bring native peoples under Spanish patterns of law and literacy has illuminated the impact of this intermediary figure on urban and rural Andean society. James Lockhart, *The Nahuas after the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992) offers the most systematic investigation of native scribal culture in colonial Mexico, for which there exists a considerable body of Nahuatl-language writings, unlike the Peruvian archives in which extant notarial records in Quechua are few.

[52] Gary Urton, "From Knots to Narratives," p. 410.

[53] Salomon, *The Cord Keepers,* p. 118; Salomon and Spalding, "Cartas atadas con quipus," p. 861.

tion to the sacraments and religious instruction of the parishioners; one of these questions touched upon the priest's illegal use of khipus: "if [the Indians] know the said priest has forced his parishioners to make offerings either by his own hand or that of his fiscales or sacristans or other persons, charging them by khipus."[54] Whether or not the implication was true, the inquiry demonstrates that the Lima archbishopric had reason to believe that priests employed string registries to categorize and sum what should have been each churchgoer's voluntary contributions at Mass and on feast days. One year following the start of Loarte Dávila's inspection, the *cura doctrinero* received the legal order from Archbishop Bartolomé Lobo Guerrero that his right to minister in the parish was revoked due to "the abuses and the bad example that he has given."[55] Did the same khipus that Loarte Dávila used to register the illegal donations serve as evidence of his crime?

In 1623, the inspector Baltazar de Padilla returned to the topic of forced contributions by khipus when conducting researches of Father Andrés de Mujica's pastoral achievements in San Juan de Huanchor in Huarochirí province. After reviewing the charges that had been filed by the parish's Andean notables against their minister, Padilla wanted to know: had Mujica in fact coerced the parishioners to make church offerings on All Saints' Day and other solemn feasts by means of "tribute quotas, khipus, and written parish registries"?[56] The second mention of this concern within the sphere of the ecclesiastical courts hints at the Church's continued recognition of the evidentiary value of khipus; in the seventeenth century, a priest's tolerance or exploitation of cord accounting would not necessarily conceal their abuses from higher church authorities. Another intriguing possibility is raised by these accounts: that the native method of recordation appealed to the traveling magistrates not only as a record of ancient superstition or personal sin, as the Jesuit extirpator Pablo José de Arriaga proposed,[57] but also as potential evidence of the transgressions of fellow Catholic ministers or exploitative Spanish corregidores.

[54] "...si sauen el dho cura forsase a sus feligreses sobre las ofrendas por si o por sus fiscales o sacristanes o por otras personas cobrandolos por quipos." AAL, Visitas Eclesiásticas, Leg. 11, Exp. 1, f. 2v.

[55] AAL, Visitas Eclesiásticas, Leg. 11, Exp. 1, f. 15r.

[56] "...si saben q. el susodho [cura] haze fuerça a sus feligreses açerca de las offrendas de todos sanctos y las otras de fiestas solemnes de entre año cobrandolas por tassa quipos y padrones contra la bol.d de los yn.os." AAL, Capítulos, Leg. 4, Exp. 3, f. 2r. This reference to evidentiary khipus has been identified previously in Salomon, *The Cord Keepers,* p. 120; and Salomon and Spalding, "Cartas atadas con quipus," p. 861.

[57] Pablo Joseph de Arriaga, *La extirpación de la idolatría en el Pirú* [1621], ed. Henrique Urbano (Cuzco: Centro de Estudios Regionales Andinos "Bartolomé de Las Casas," 1999), p. 133.

An improbable work, surfacing outside the legal docket, brings to light a related but clandestine use for khipus in that period. In 1602, the Lima printer Antonio Ricardo published Diego Dávalos y Figueroa's *Miscelánea austral,* a wide-ranging treatise in prose and verse on such diverse subjects as love and dreams, the music of Tuscany, and indigenous America's propensity for Christianity. Drawing on several decades as a soldier and miner in the southern Peruvian highlands, the Spanish-born author included the following account, as told from one *limeño* to another, which was meant to illustrate the native Andeans' belief in the afterlife:

> Passing down the streets of a town called Atunjauja in company of the corregidor, we saw an old Indian with a large bunch of cords in his hand that were made of firmly twisted wool and diverse colors, which they call khipus. When this Indian realized that the corregidor and I had seen him, he tried to hide what he was carrying, but before he could do that the corregidor summoned him and asked what the long accounts contained. Flustered, the Indian began to vacillate, which made the corregidor want to know even more, so he threatened to thrash him and cut his hair (the greatest injury one can do to them). Eventually the Indian confessed, explaining that the khipu, together with other very large ones he owned, were the account he had to give to the Inca upon his return from the other world of all that had happened in that valley during his absence. The account included all the Spaniards who had passed down the royal road, what they had asked for and bought, and what they had done both for good and for bad. The corregidor seized and burned his accounts and punished the Indian.[58]

The story of the Inca's return was compatible with Catholic teachings on the resurrection of the dead and the immortality of the soul, and one that Andeans and missionary clergy of the period commonly embraced, though sometimes

[58] "...andando en compañia del corregidor por las calles de vn pueblo llamado Atunxauxa, vimos vn Indio viejo, con vn grande maço de cuerdas de lana bien torcida y de diuersas, colores en la mano, que ellos llaman Quipos, pues como este Indio viesse que el corregidor y yo le auiamos visto, procuró esconderse con su carga, mas no lo pudo hazer como pensaua, porque el corregidor lo llamó y preguntó de que eran tan largas quentas, el Indio turbado començo a variar, con lo qual acrescentó en el corregidor el desseo de saber lo que le preguntaua, y assi lo puso en termino de açotes y de cortarle el cabello (que es la mayor afrenta que se les puede hazer) el Indio vino a confessar diziendo, que aquel quipo con otros muy grandes que tenia, era la razon y cuenta que auia de dar al Inga quando boluiesse del otro mundo de todo lo que auia succedido en aquel valle en su ausencia: donde se yncluyan todos los Españoles que por aquel real camino auian passado, lo que auian pedido y comprado, todo lo que auian hecho assi en bien como en mal. El corregidor tomó y quemó sus quentas, y castigó al Indio." Diego Dávalos y Figueroa, *Primera parte de la Miscelánea austral* (Lima: Antonio Ricardo, 1602), p. 151r. This account has also been cited in English translation in Sabine MacCormack, "'The Heart Has Its Reasons': Predicaments of Missionary Christianity in Early Colonial Peru," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 65:3 (1985), p. 458. I would like to thank Michael T. Hamerly for providing me with information on the biography of Dávalos y Figueroa.

with competing interpretations.[59] What makes Dávalos y Figueroa's narration valuable for the present discussion, however, is that it allows us to glimpse the existence of informal cord-based surveillance practices similar to the "moral policing" technique that Toledo had demanded of the cabildo's notary-khipukamayuq. The Spanish corregidores, it is clear, did not welcome the viceroy's position on these types of accounts and had good reason to suppress them, given the cords' well-known capacity to record colonialist abuses. Here the elderly man's strings not only registered the commercial transactions of the Europeans but also the good and evil deeds they had done.

The origin of such practices of denunciation may also be linked to the Third Council's confessionary model. If we recall the *Tercero catecismo's* instruction to penitents, we comprehend the unclear boundaries that separated the private custom of the sacrament from the public act of denunciation. For example, to establish for Andean converts the meaning of confession, the sermon manual's authors employed the metaphor of storehouse exchange as a way to capture the economy of sin and its countable aspect: "you make a khipu of what you give *and what you are owed"* (emphasis mine).[60] The priests' official homily thus accentuated the social obligations of Christian practice and the vital place of accounting one's debts and those of others in upholding the civil order. One can imagine how for Andean neophytes the conceptual domain of individual wrongdoing and absolution would overlap with that of public crime and reparation. As the sermon's language suggests, the same cords that penitents used to catalog sins could also record the transgressions committed against them by fellow Andeans, Spanish corregidores, or even parish priests. Was the indigenous activism of cord holders partly inspired by the ambiguities inherent to the Church's sacramental pedagogy? Did Andean cord specialists perceive a link between the confessional and the ecclesiastical court? Did they see them as complementary fora designed for the accounting of transgressions?

The utilization of khipus for recording and denouncing the misdeeds of others was validated more explicitly by Andean tradition. Historian El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega expressed from an indigenous perspective the similarity between pre-Hispanic khipu conventions and post-conquest Christian customs. In ancient times, he recounted, the Inca's strings archived the laws of the state religion, the record of violators and their transgressions, and the

[59] Estenssoro Fuchs, *Del paganismo a la santidad,* pp. 353-354.

[60] Estenssoro Fuchs, *Del paganismo a la santidad,* p. 217; and Harrison, "Pérez Bocanegra's *Ritual formulario,"* p. 270, discuss the significance of "hucha," the missionary Quechua term for sin, and how it underscores the countable aspect of church teachings on the topic of confession.

penalties each was obliged to receive: "In this way, each thread and knot recalled for them the information that it contained, similar to the Ten Commandments or the articles of our Holy Catholic Faith and the works of mercy, for which we understand from the number what each one requires of us."[61] Garcilaso's testimony highlights the continuity between the numbers that registered the dictates of Christian doctrine and Inca strings that inventoried religious crimes and penalties of restitution. This functional ambiguity that derived from both Inca and Catholic teachings shows us that for Andeans, the distance separating the private realm of the confessional and the public realm of the courtroom may not have been as great as we might think. One limitation of khipu studies, I would argue, has been to isolate the confessional applications of cord registries from legal ones. But to appreciate the broader context of Spanish-Andean parish relationships like those in seventeenth-century Andahuaylillas, an assessment of the close association between the two is needed. By way of conclusion, I return to Pérez Bocanegra's writings to consider how contemporary polemics with regard to the legal and missionary utility of khipus may have informed his views on the native parish assistants who employed them.

CORD KEEPERS AS RIVAL AUTHORITIES

At the most obvious level, Pérez Bocanegra's account instructs us that confessional string practices responded more to community necessities and circumstances than the expectations and goals of the Peruvian church hierarchy. Some of these expectations and goals were strictly doctrinal. For example, the clergyman reproved the collective, localized nature of the Andeans' confessions at a time when canon law ordered confession to be a private face-to-face dialogue, excepting cases that required linguistic interpretation. The parish assistants of Andahuaylillas, we recall, taught native students to prepare khipus of their own sins and those of others; they fashioned khipus collectively and bore witness to transgressions they themselves did not commit. Moreover, Pérez Bocanegra condemned the parishioners' habit of reusing the same knots for repeated confessions in apparent ignorance of the sacrament's power of absolution. Under the leadership of Andean catechists, to whom he applied the charged epithet of "alumbrados," the parishioners had adopted an independent approach to the sacrament out-

[61] "De manera, que cada hilo y ñudo les traía a la memoria lo que en sí contenía, a semejanza de los mandamientos o artículos de nuestra santa fe católica y obras de misericordia, que por el número sacamos lo que debajo de él se nos manda." El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *Comentarios reales de los Incas* [1609, 1617], in *Obras completas del Inca Garcilaso de la Vega,* ed. Carmelo Sáenz de Santa María, vol. 2 (Madrid: Ediciones Atlas, 1960), p. 205.

side proper ecclesiastical channels, thus evoking what Estenssoro has described as "the Protestant phantom" that afflicted missionary clergy throughout Peru: the fear of individualized interpretations of the Christian message that would supplant the authority of the Church and its ministers.[62]

A brief review of the parish's litigious history indicates that Jesuit confessionary methodologies may have formed the basis of the *presbítero's* complaint. From the biographical summaries of Harrison and Bruce Mannheim,[63] we learn that Pérez Bocanegra assumed posts in the cathedral of Cuzco and that city's parish of Belén before his appointment as beneficiary of nearby Andahuaylillas, in the province of Quispicanchi, where he also acted as examiner general of Quechua and Aymara for aspiring *curas de indios* of the diocese.[64] A more than 20-year labor, the *Ritual formulario* was composed and published during a lengthy period of litigation between the diocese and the Society of Jesus, which sought to annex the parish as a Quechua-language training ground for members of the order. Granted royal approval for the takeover in 1621, the Jesuits eventually replaced Pérez Bocanegra in 1628, but were forced to return the parish to him eight years later due to the relentless protestations of the ecclesiastical cabildo. In this context, the author's conceivable hostility toward the Jesuits can be located in his proposals for sacramental administration. He denounced the cataloguing of sins by khipus, a Jesuit-endorsed practice, and their utilization to reiterate prior confessions.[65] In a thinly veiled critique of the parish's earlier stewardship, Pérez Bocanegra asked the Andeans about the bad ways of their devotion and he was eager to publish in his manual their reply: "the Father or Fathers they knew growing up had taught them these things."[66]

The author's recommendations for how to confess Andeans helps us to round out this fragmentary portrait of a cleric besieged by Jesuits and parish-

[62] Estenssoro Fuchs, *Del paganismo a la santidad,* p. 227.

[63] Harrison, "Pérez Bocanegra's *Ritual formulario,"* p. 270; Bruce Mannheim, *The Language of the Inka since the European Invasion* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), pp. 47-48, 146.

[64] Alan Durston, *Pastoral Quechua: The History of Christian Translation in Colonial Peru, 1550-1650* (University of Notre Dame Press, in press), elucidates Pérez Bocanegra's career as a missionary linguist and his development of a missionary Quechua that establishes identifications between Christian and Andean entities and draws from Inca religious terms and motifs.

[65] Regarding the latter practice, the Peruvian Jesuits were well known for their advocacy of "general confessions," which encompassed the recurring enactment of the penitent's entire biography instead of the more conventional recounting of only those sins committed since the previous sacrament. See John W. O'Malley, *The First Jesuits* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 39; Estenssoro Fuchs, *Del paganismo a la santidad,* pp. 206-207 n. 160.

[66] "...hazen muy malas cosas, diziendo, que el Padre ó los Padres con quien se an criado se las an enseñado." Pérez Bocanegra, *Ritual formulario,* p. 115.

ioners alike. An astonishing 70 questions of his manual for confessors were devoted to finding out whether Andean penitents had violated the eighth commandment's prohibition on dishonest testimony. Questions touched all indigenous social groups and forms of bearing false witness, but litigious community leaders stood out as one of his foremost concerns. Ethnic lords *(curacas)* should be asked if they had falsely accused the clergy, and the notary-khipukamayuq, if he had falsified indigenous wills to the detriment of the church's estate.[67] The most suggestive reference to the priest's familiarity with Andean practices of denunciation came in a question formulated to the Andean congregants in general: "Have you denounced another's sin before any judge, out of the hatred you had for that person, or to take revenge on him because you were not able to prove the crime of which you accused him?"[68] Though this line of inquiry was characteristic of the confession manuals published in that time, it allows us to place Pérez Bocanegra's concerns about Andeans' moral conduct in the sphere of an indigenous activism that threatened priestly authority in parishes throughout the viceroyalty, in all probability including his own. We do not know whether the beneficiary himself had been singled out for ministerial crimes, but his pointed criticisms of both khipu handlers and native litigants implies that these intersecting social groups undermined his consistently expressed goal to impose orthodox religious behavior in Andahuaylillas.

Estenssoro has observed that the true scandal underlying Pérez Bocanegra's complaint against khipus was that the "elder brothers and sisters" (*hermanos y hermanas mayores*), as the native catechists were known by the villagers, had usurped the sacramental authority that belonged to the priest. In the words of the beneficiary: "Before the Indian penitent goes to the feet of the confessor and priest, he or she has already confessed all the sins to these Indian women and men."[69] To curb their influence, he called for uprooting the secret meetings (*juntas y ruedas*) in which they prepared knotted strings and spread falsehoods about priests and Catholic teachings.[70] The containment of cords and their keepers should also come, he urged, through the triumph of the printed word. In lock step with the Third Council's more aggressive recommendations, which expressed no tolerance of native

[67] Pérez Bocanegra, *Ritual formulario,* pp. 271, 278.

[68] "Acusaste ante qualquier juez, el peccado de otro, por odio que le tuuiesses? ó por vengarte de el, no pudiendo probar el delito de que le acusaste?" Pérez Bocanegra, *Ritual formulario,* pp. 336-337.

[69] "Antes que vaya el Indio, ó India penitente a los pies del Confesor, y Sacerdote, ya se á confessado con estas Indias, é Indios de todos los pecados." Pérez Bocanegra, *Ritual formulario,* p. 111. See Estenssoro Fuchs, *Del paganismo a la santidad,* p. 224.

[70] Pérez Bocanegra, *Ritual formulario,* p. 134.

refusals to meet the pressures of orthodoxy, Pérez Bocanegra advised priests to seize and destroy the Andeans' knotted strings and to use in their place the directives of his published manual: "teach them to confess by the rules of this *confesionario* and take from them those accounts and knots and burn them in their presence, and deny them the sacrament of the Eucharist until all have been brought to the proper method of confession."[71] The book promised to stabilize the form of missionary ritual, which had been misdirected by the khipu "palimpsests" of the cord masters' improvised spiritual repertoire. At issue for the author was not merely the danger of heterodox confession, but more important the question of who controlled the mechanisms of religious exchange and therefore power over the community.

Still, that Pérez Bocanegra threatened to withhold communion from the parishioners represents an implicit acknowledgement of their fervent approach to the Catholic devotions. To highlight their alleged ignorance, he explained that Andean penitents mistakenly believed they were sanctified after confessing with strings. Here we apprehend the Catholic intentions with which they made the sacrament, and the conviction that they did so within what they considered the bounds of Christian orthodoxy.[72] Similarly, in the public realm of the ecclesiastical courts, native plaintiffs repeatedly avowed the soundness of their religious practices and principles. They expressed the need to protect the welfare of Andean communities from the prohibited actions of priests by demanding that the values of the Church with regard to justice be upheld.

Pérez Bocanegra's depiction of the challenges he faced as priest leads us to a fundamental question that the Peruvian clergy struggled to answer: how to categorize as "Catholic" Andeans who employed traditional media in their willful quest to fulfill the sacraments and to redress the wrongs of Spanish authority. Cord keepers seem to have occupied positions that overlapped in unexpected ways the various social groups that made up colonial parish society. The fact that they belied the conventional patterns of acculturation or resistance that contemporary European sources often ascribed to them forces us to reassess the idea that priests and Andeans always took up one side or another of a strict cultural divide, or that books were the only means of communicating Spanish rule to local native villages. Both colo-

[71] "...enseñarles á confessar conforme este Confessionario quitandoles aquellas cuentas, y ñudos; y quemandolos en su presencia. Y no darles el Sacramento de la Eucaristia, hasta tenerlos reduzidos, al buen orden de se confessar sin semejantes enredos, y defetos." Pérez Bocanegra, *Ritual formulario,* p. 114.

[72] Estenssoro Fuchs, *Del paganismo a la santidad,* p. 225. See Mills, "The Naturalisation."

nizers and colonized engaged in a continual process of reformulating their messages and their media in light of fluid colonial realities. While scholars are still far from knowing how native intermediaries communicated with strings, the recent effort to interpret cord records and their guardians according to specific historical contexts and operations, as opposed to treating them as mere victims of writing's advance, offers one of the most promising paths for extending today's Andeanist researches on the history of contested colonialisms in early Spanish America.[73] The cord keepers, taken as a category of analysis, may yet disclose further cracks in the imperial center's hold on its colonial territories.

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[73] This observation is made in Gary Urton, "From Knots to Narratives," pp. 431-432.