



Vol. 8, No. 1, Fall 2010, 493-501
www.ncsu.edu/project/acontracorriente

Review/Reseña

Gonzalo Lamana, *Domination without Dominance: Inca-Spanish Encounters in Early Colonial Peru*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2008.

Exploding Official Accounts of the Spanish Conquest of Peru

Peter Gose

Carleton University

This important book will fundamentally change how scholars look at proto-colonial Peru. It offers new ways of reading the relevant documents and new insights into all of the important events between 1532 and 1549. Lamana's basic goal is to interrupt the "narcotic effect" of traditional histories that exclude everything but Spanish military victories from their frame. Subordinated details such as books that were expected to talk, predatory horses, and Inca military campaigns that attacked only on nights of the waxing moon open up alternative contending logics during the Spanish invasion. Whereas many scholars have demonstrated the ongoing

importance of Andean agendas and relations in subsequent colonial moments, Lamana's is the only sustained attempt to do so during the first decades of the Spanish presence. The result is gratifying: as indigenous projects and grids of intelligibility emerge, so does the full complexity and indeterminacy of the "conquest," and the control assumed in early Spanish narratives of these events recedes in stature from an achieved reality to a fragile hegemonic bid. In the process, Lamana valiantly and successfully finesses the tensions between ethnohistory and post-colonial theory by focussing on improvisation, mimesis and indeterminacy.

Chapter One recounts the fateful encounter of Atahualpa and Pizarro at Cajamarca. Rather than construct a single overarching narrative, Lamana emphasizes that conflicting impulses in both parties produced these events, which therefore had an improvised, murky and even hallucinatory quality. He portrays a protracted exploratory process in which the Incas assessed the Spaniards' status as thieves or divine beings and the potency of their ancestral deity (*huaca*), while the Spaniards engaged in a complex "negotiation of fear," in both themselves and their Andean interlocutors. An initial encounter at the Inca encampment proves indecisive as both the Spaniards' cavalry displays and the communicative protocols of Inca divine kingship fail to impose a definitive frame and give way to moments of curiosity, diplomacy, and annoyance. The next day, the Inca slowly and ceremoniously approaches the Spaniards prepared to test his warlike luck (*atao*) against the power of the Spaniards' *huaca*, which turns out to be the bible of Friar Valverde, who comes out with an interpreter to meet them and demand their conversion as part of the *requerimiento*. When the bible fails to speak as a credible *huaca* must, the Inca's retinue of 5,000 reframe the invaders as mere thieves. The Spaniards then emerge from hiding in a violent frenzy, capture Atahualpa and slaughter most of his retinue. For Lamana, this victory derives from Spaniards' compressed visceral fear, not unquestionable military superiority or preordained colonial success. His account of Cajamarca is innovative and largely convincing, but also challengeable. It relies heavily on an uncritical reading of Betanzos, who married into Atahualpa's surviving kin and arguably attempted to rehabilitate them by portraying

Atahualpa as credulous towards the Spaniards' potential divinity (see Gose 2008: 58-60). How seriously this problem compromises the analysis is open to debate, but I expect it will stand with only small revisions.

Chapter Two deals with the events surrounding Atahualpa's "ransom," a Spanish gloss on what was at the time, in Lamana's view, an open-ended interaction that escaped any clear or singular intersubjective meaning. Throughout the nine months in question, Pizarro and Atahualpa lived and communicated in close proximity so that the aura of each rubbed off on the other. Provincial delegations came to pay ritual obeisance to Atahualpa and to assess the Spaniards. The emperor's captivity did not end his sacrality but did promote alternative forms of power. Many Andean people flocked to Cajamarca to serve the Spaniards as *yanacunas* and some provincial lords offered them provisions in what was probably an alliance strategy. Atahualpa countered by directing the Spaniards to raise his "ransom" through pillage of his enemies' shrines, and thus made the invaders' actions into an extension of his own continuing power. In turn, the Spaniards realized Atahualpa's sacrality and alternated between violating and appropriating it. They also tried to evoke a mystique of their own, both by conspicuously breaking prohibitions in the shrines they looted and by suggesting that their horses needed to consume gold and silver. Lamana assiduously plays up the interaction of all parties' diverse and sometimes conflicting impulses to lay open the real indeterminacy of these events and to explore the politics of their intelligibility. In so doing, his targets are both the primary sources and Hemming's classic modern account based on them, which either erase or contain the alterity he unleashes. Lamana makes good use of such figures as Guha, de Certeau, and Ginzburg to develop alternative reading strategies for this familiar material. Yet he also criticizes occidentalized subaltern readings, exemplified by Obeyesekere, that join colonial accounts in silencing or neutralizing dissonant but co-present indigenous agendas, including those that may have sacralized the Spaniards.

Chapter Three covers the period of coexistence in Cuzco between the Spaniards and Manco Inca (1533-6). Defeating the remnants of Atahualpa's army made them allies, but Lamana observes that Manco still operated as

an Inca sovereign, so much so that despite Sancho's official account to the contrary, Pizarro did not actually dare to read Manco the *requerimiento* that he become a vassal of the Spanish crown. Although the Spaniards' military success was extraordinary, and their sacking of Cuzco was systematic, they did not attempt to interfere in Inca politico-ritual life. Pizarro's vulnerability in relation to Alvarado, Almagro, and representatives of the Spanish crown was no less pronounced and produced comparable machinations. Lamana argues that Pizarro's founding of the *cabildo* of Cuzco and his granting of *encomiendas* were acts of colonial ordering designed more to pre-empt other Spanish colonizers than to subjugate Manco. Yet he also holds that the Pizarros deliberately provoked and enabled Manco to revolt against them in 1536, since overt native disloyalty would neutralize various critiques from other Spanish factions. Lamana does not even try to tell us how this new imperative overrode the earlier one to treat Manco with kid gloves, since he aims not to provide a better overarching narrative of the events in question, but simply to explode official accounts. This refusal, apparently inspired by Taussig's "stop making sense" phase, limits Lamana's challenge to exploring a succession of discordant details, suggesting their larger significance without actually embodying it in a new narrative. Still, this strategy opens up many new historiographic questions in a previously stultified field, and so must be welcomed whatever its shortcomings may be.

Chapter Four covers Manco Inca's rebellion, and uses the lunar timing of his attacks on Cuzco to confront standard military narratives. Manco sacrificed and refrained from attacking during the waning moon, then attacked during the waxing moon. Far from being a dysfunctional military conservative, Lamana argues that Manco aimed not merely to defeat the Spaniards in battle, but to reassert Inca modes of power in so doing. During one such offensive, the Incas overwhelmed the fortress of Sacsayhuaman above Cuzco, and nearly took the city itself. A former Inca general who had joined their camp advised the Spaniards to counterattack on the new moon when Manco's power was at low ebb, and they retook the fortress. Another Spanish foray targeted the Inca shrine at Huanacaure, 11 km. southwest of Cuzco. Launched on Corpus Christi, this raid at one level

announced Christian triumph over idolatry, but at another, continued a dialogue in Inca terms. Emblematic of Inca military dominance, Huanacaure was key in the initiation of Inca warriors and therefore a symbolically valuable target. Thus, the Spaniards entered into the cultural matrix of Inca warfare in ways that standard military accounts, which assume a univocal instrumental logic, fail to register. In place of such masterful narratives, Lamana argues that the salient dynamic was mimesis, in which each side had to counter the moves of the other in a practico-symbolic improvisation process that neither could control. Lamana's critique also extends to the emphasis on inter-ethnic alliance as an alternative to standard conquest historiography. Andean groups such as the Huancas and Chachapoyas, long considered to be Spanish allies in defeating the Incas, turn out to be internally riven over whether Inca power is really defunct. Following Medinaceli (2007), however, one could derive these opposed political strategies from Andean moiety organization and so minimize any opposition between structure and event. In any case, this is largely a separate matter from mimesis, as are other useful arguments about Spanish power as a culture of terror that disarticulated local orders and refused to operate in the epistemic mode that post-colonial criticism expects. Perhaps only a fuller narrative could resolve how these diverse arguments relate to each other but again, their very heterogeneity is in itself important progress.

Chapter Five addresses the oft-neglected career of Paullu Inca as a pioneer of "mestizo consciousness," who appropriated the Spanish presence instead of resisting it. Lamana explores his ingenious subverting of Spanish forms of recognition from within, being more Christian and more loyal to the Spanish crown than the conquistadores, while assimilating these stances into recognizably Inca ruling practices. This continuity of Inca government was politically crucial as it rallied provincial lords to various Spanish causes when they might have allied with his rebel half-brother Manco. Far from treating Paullu as a "puppet Inca," Lamana discovers the continuing viability of Inca power at precisely the moment (Manco's retreat to the jungle) when most histories declare it defunct or residual. Not surprisingly, the Spanish warrant for Paullu's strategy was the clergy's

critique of conquistador power. To the extent that *encomenderos* emulated pagan Andean lords through polygyny, went about in litters, received obeisance (*mocha*) from indigenous subjects, and neglected their duty to evangelize their charges, they opened a moral space for Christianizing *señores naturales*, of whom Paullu was the prototype and perfect specimen. Thus, Paullu's career marks an emergent interlocking of Spanish and Inca modes of power, one that corresponds to a realization that the Spanish presence might become permanent, which dawned on Andean people only in the 1540s according to Lamana.

Chapter Six carries over into Paullu's further exploits during that decade, in contrast to the standard historiographic focus on civil wars among Spaniards. Lamana shows that far from being settled, relations between Spaniards and Indians had yet to crystallize into colonial domination, and that Núñez Vela's attempts to enforce the New Laws only put the matter into further doubt. In this context, Paullu's successful bids for Spanish sumptuary and religious distinction deeply disturbed the invaders, all the more so because he continued to preside over Inca state rituals, often with church complicity. Here the contrast with subsequent attempts to "extirpate idolatry" underlines just how unconsolidated Spanish power remained, even at this relatively late date. Similarly, Lamana argues that in economic activities, Spaniards were obliged to adopt Andean practices even as they tried to represent themselves as mercantile actors. By the same token, Andean people began to demand payment for goods and services after Núñez Vela, and so not only undid an earlier proto-colonial normality of direct seizure (*rancheo*) but also began to encroach on Spaniards' mercantile self-image. These uncomfortable convergences led Spaniards to exoticize native practices as a way of reinstating threatened differences. The book ends with Paullu's death in 1549 not because the question of colonial domination had been resolved by then, but rather because it still remained relatively open.

As a piece of specialist writing, this book is a resounding success that teems with new insights. It will be harder going for general readers not already familiar with the narratives it debunks, however, since it implicitly depends upon them in its refusal to play their game. *Domination without*

Dominance certainly establishes a radical re-reading of the “primitive accounts of the conquest,” but it does so by juxtaposition with rigorous archival research that is so fluidly presented that it is almost transparent. Lamana finds most of his unruly details in *probanzas* from many archives in Argentina, Peru, Spain and the United States, where he clearly did extended work. These sources address many of the same events as published narratives of the “conquest,” but operate under a different network of constraints and possibilities that makes comparison between these genres particularly revealing. Lamana’s methodological innovation lies in the strategic exploitation of these differences, which is fruitful as indicated above but also problematic. Since the *probanzas* are typically later than the narratives, some historical problems can arise in their comparison, which tends to synchronize them because they are about the same events. In a rapidly changing context such as this, however, retrospective understandings of events necessarily differ from those that held at the time. Consequently, one must constantly monitor the discrepancy between the two, whether in narratives or *probanzas*. Lamana is not always sufficiently careful in this regard, for example in the way he takes at face value Betanzos’ account of events twenty very eventful years in the past. Since such lapses are always in the service of reconstructing plausible Andean projects beyond the ken of existing historiography, I find them not only forgivable but necessary, even if some do not ultimately withstand scrutiny.

Theoretically, the book is well-informed and refreshingly anthropological for a project that so thoroughly overlaps with history and literary criticism. Without bothering to argue explicitly against Spivak, it systematically undercuts her Kantian treatment of the subaltern as a mute “thing in itself,” intelligible to us only through the medium of colonial reason. It also contrasts notably with authors like Estenssoro (2003) without overtly contesting their inflated *hispanismo*. Lamana clearly falls on Sahlins’ side of the controversy with Obeyesekere, and insists that important cultural differences operated within these events, generated their murkiness, were prior to and deeper than questions of colonial boundary maintenance, etc. At no point does this reinstatement of culture become a

determinism or an impediment to mimesis and improvisation, but a more explicit reconciliation of these emphases would have been useful. One obvious possibility would have been to argue, following Bourdieu, that improvisation is actually always the primary mode of producing cultural regularities and that it presupposes profound immersion in a tradition rather than a break from it, as Lamana often seems to imply. Similarly, mimesis could be used to argue that cultural differences are never absolute and to explain intercultural alignments and syncretisms, but Lamana generally treats it as an immediate conjunctural phenomenon, and so distances it from the cultural explanations he also deploys. These disjunctive understandings of improvisation and mimesis are consistent with his emphasis on interruption and his refusal to construct extended counter-narratives, but are unnecessarily self-limiting, to this reader at least. A theoretical reckoning with Ortner (1995), which unfortunately does not occur, would have helped to raise and advance discussion of all these issues. The continuing dominance of post-colonial criticism may well explain these gaps in what is clearly a sophisticated version of a different sort of argument: maybe this is as much anthropology as the market will currently bear in this field of study. Still, a book is clearly a success if the worst one can say about it is that it fails to explore all the worthwhile avenues it opens up. As someone who has recently published in some of the areas that Lamana covers, I admire what he has accomplished and wish I could have had the benefit of it earlier. He has shown us how to read this notoriously opaque period of Andean history in a new and tremendously more productive way. This landmark book will be of lasting value for that contribution.

Works Cited

- Estenssoro, J.C. 2003. *Del paganismo a la santidad: La incorporación de los indios del Perú al catholicismo, 1532-1750*. Lima: Instituto Frances de Estudios Andinos/Instituto Riva-Agüero.
- Gose, P. 2008. *Invaders as Ancestors: On the Intercultural Making and*

Unmaking of Spanish Colonialism in the Andes. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Medinaceli, X. 2007. "Paullu y Manco ¿una diarquía inca en tiempos de conquista?" *Boletín del Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos* 36/2: 241-258.

Ortner, S. 1995. "Resistance and the Problem of Ethnographic Refusal". *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37/1: 173-193.