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978-0-521-10539-2 - Anthropological History of Andean Polities

Edited by John V. Murra, Nathan Wachtel, and Jacques Revel

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Anthropological History of Andean Polities

This collection of essays by scholars from the Andes, Europe, and the United States was originally published in the French journal *Annales* as a special double issue entitled *The Historical Anthropology of Andean Societies*. It combines the perspectives of archaeology, anthropology, and history to present a complex view of Andean societies over various millennia.

The unique features of the Andean landscape, the impact of the Inka state on different regions and ethnic groups, the transformations wrought through the colonial presence, and the creation of nineteenth-century republics are all analyzed, as are the profound continuities in some aspects of Andean culture and social organization to the present day.

The book reflects some of the most innovative research of the last two decades. Apart from its substantive interest for students of the Andes and American civilizations in general, it shows the possibility of closer collaboration between history and anthropology. Of the three editors, John V. Murra is president of the Institute of Andean Research in New York and Nathan Wachtel and Jacques Revel are each *directeur d'études* at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales in Paris.

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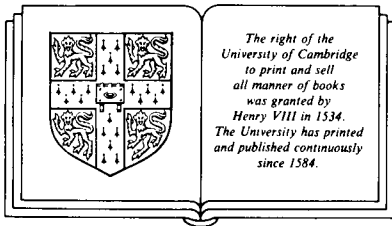
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[More information](#)

Contributors

JEAN BERTHELOT

Researcher

Institut de l'Amérique Latine

Paris, France

THÉRÈSE BOUYSSÉ-CASSAGNE

Chargée de Recherche

*Conseil National de la Recherche
Scientifique*

Paris, France

VERÓNICA CERECEDA

Researcher

Museo de Arte Precolombino

Santiago, Chile

OLIVIER DOLLFUS

Professor of Geography

University of Paris – VII

Paris, France

JORGE A. FLORES OCHOA

Professor of Anthropology

Universidad del Cusco

Cusco, Peru

OLIVIA HARRIS

Senior Lecturer in Anthropology

*Goldsmiths College, University
of London*

London, England

ANA MARÍA LORANDI

Director

Department of Anthropology

Universidad de Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires, Argentina

FLOYD G. LOUNSBURY

Professor Emeritus of

Anthropology

Yale University

New Haven, Connecticut

ANTOINETTE MOLINIÉ-

FIORAVANTI

Chargée de Recherche

Conseil National de la

Recherche Scientifique

Paris, France

CRAIG MORRIS

Chief Curator of Anthropology

American Museum of Natural

History

New York, New York

JOHN V. MURRA

President

Institute of Andean Research

New York, New York

LAUTARO NÚÑEZ

Researcher

Instituto de Investigaciones

Arqueológicas

Universidad del Norte

San Pedro de Atacama, Chile

TRISTAN PLATT

Researcher

Biblioteca Nacional

Sucre, Bolivia

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[More information](#)

viii CONTRIBUTORS

JACQUES REVEL
Directeur d'Etudes
Ecole des Hautes Etudes en
Sciences Sociales
Paris, France

THIERRY SAIGNES
Chargé de recherche
Conseil National de la Recherche
Scientifique
Paris, France

FRANK SALOMON
Associate Professor of
Anthropology
University of Wisconsin
Madison, Wisconsin

NATHAN WACHTEL
Directeur d'Etudes
Ecole des Hautes Etudes en
Sciences Sociales
Paris, France

R. T. ZUIDEMA
Professor of Anthropology
University of Illinois
Urbana, Illinois

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Preface

In recent years studies of Andean civilizations by native scholars have flourished in the Andean homelands. Overseas scholars have also lent a hand. Although events in all five Andean republics have warranted curiosity about current developments, the more notable feature of this scholarship has been the growing number of inquiries about the Andean achievement before 1532. The dense populations in a precapitalist society, the remarkable productivity of high-altitude crops and the effect of high-altitude biology, unparalleled textile arts and the vast installations for weaving manufactures, the native perception and use of the southern sky, religious and political symbolism – all of these are privileged topics of current scholarly concern.

Beyond the academic community, many others have become active in defense of the Andean patrimony. Andean camelids and their pastures, the cultivation and use of the coca leaf, the terracing and irrigation of the mountainsides – all these are threatened by foreign intervention. Another expression of this defense is a growing preoccupation with the literary future of the Aymara and Quechua languages, spoken by some 10 million citizens of the five republics, at a time when the mass media have discovered that these speakers are also a market.

In 1984, the Facultad Latino-Americana de Ciencias Sociales of Quito began to offer a two-year program leading to a master's degree in Andean history – an initiative without precedent. Graduates of universities in all five Andean republics, and some from elsewhere, applied; and about thirty received scholarships supporting a year of formal class work with an international faculty drawn from three continents. A second year of thesis research in the field or the archives will follow.

The editors of the special issue of *Annales* in which the essays in this book were originally published in French (in 1978) did not have the Quito group in mind when they assembled this collection of articles, but we welcome them aboard.* A new threshold in Andean history will have been reached once the full participation of Argentinian, Bolivian, Chilean, Ecuadorean, and Peruvian scholars is ensured.

*The translations for this English edition were made by Susan Drucker Brown, J. V. Murra, and Tristan Platt.

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Of the seventeen authors represented in this collection, nine are Europeans, four come from the Andes, and four are from the United States. No attempt was made to guarantee coverage of the entire spectrum of Andean studies: Some thirty scholars known for their current contributions to Andean history were invited to contribute essays reflecting ongoing research. Some of the chapters are archaeological; some are based on primary written sources; others draw on contemporary ethnographic fieldwork. All seventeen authors have in common an awareness of the benefits of combining field research, familiarity with Andean languages, and personal experience with the remarkable continuities that link present-day Andean practice and thought with the pre-European past.

We hope the reader will find persuasive our effort to blend anthropological and historical tactics. It is commonplace to deplore the absence of an Andean version of events and institutions by referring to the scarcity of vernacular texts. We try to demonstrate that by combining the several approaches used in the present work, we also intend to share in the Andean vision and to suggest questions that could extend the range of its voice.

JOHN V. MURRA
Institute of Andean Research