

Latin American History and Culture: An Archival Record

Series 1: The Yale University Collection of Latin American Manuscripts, Part I

Introductory Essays

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by Sabine Hyland, St. Norbert College

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The Yale University Collection of Latin American Manuscripts: A Researcher's Overview

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One of the finest collections of early Latin American manuscripts in the United States, the Yale University Collection of Latin American Manuscripts has remained relatively unknown to scholars outside the Yale community. Now, however, with the publication of part of this collection by Primary Source Microfilm, Yale's many treasures of original and often unique historical documents from Latin America will be easily available to scholars around the world. Although materials from colonial Peru form one of the greatest strengths of the collection, the collection also includes significant documents from Mexico, Central America, Spain, and the regions covered by present-day Colombia, Bolivia, Argentina, and Paraguay.

This rich assemblage of primary documents presents more research possibilities than can be enumerated fully here. This essay will discuss the general themes covered by the materials in different geographical areas and time periods while drawing attention to some of the more significant manuscripts. Publication of this portion of the Yale University Collection of Latin American Manuscripts will allow both graduate students and undergraduates to conduct original archival research among largely unpublished manuscripts. Some of the documents may provide invaluable assistance in a research paper. Other primary sources may serve as the basis of a major research project on a variety of Mexican and South American topics, such as native culture, church history, economics, geography, art history, literature, and the wars of independence.

South America

There are a total of seventy-four manuscript volumes from South America in Yale's collection. Most of these volumes contain a single text, but some consist of various texts bound together. Forty-eight volumes contain original manuscripts from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries; the remaining twenty-six volumes consist of original manuscripts from nineteenth-century South America.

Numerous topics, such as Catholic Church history, native cultures, economics, mining, and politics are represented by the South American documents. Documents about church history in the collection include original inventories of church decorations and furnishings, account books of religious orders and the Cathedral of Lima, books of legislation, letters, and so forth. A 1773 manuscript by Francisco Antonio Gonzalez discusses the clergy of Cuzco, and an 1809 volume by the Brotherhood of the Holy Trinity describes the goals and ideals of that religious society. This latter manuscript contains a beautifully painted frontispiece. There are also numerous manuscripts

concerning the Jesuits in Peru. These include a lengthy Inquisition report dated 1731, detailing the alleged “crimes” of the Jesuits in Paraguay and urging that the Society be expelled from South America. The Peruvian Inquisition’s hostility to the Jesuits can be seen in a 1736 manuscript that recounts an auto-da-fé held in Lima. The Inquisition burned in effigy Father Juan Francisco de Ulloa, a Jesuit missionary in Chile who had died in 1710. Other manuscripts reveal the economic ramifications of the Jesuit expulsion from South America. For example, one (540 pages), from 1771 describes the income from Jesuit missions throughout South America; another (115 pages), from 1788, describes the wealth of the Jesuit haciendas in the Cuzco region.

The Yale collection also contains numerous documents that provide information about the lives of native peoples in South America. There are several original sixteenth-century handwritten account books recording Indian tribute payments in the Cuzco area. Two important and unknown eighteenth-century manuscripts, the Expediente sobre usurpación de tierras ... de los indios de Late y de la Rinconada (1783) and Expediente original [del] Convento de la Merced ... contra los indios del pueblo de Miraflores (1782–84), detail the original land and water rights of three Indian communities near Lima. The religion and culture of native peoples in Peru is discussed in two eighteenth-century manuscripts, one titled Manifiesto de los agravios ... que padecen los indios del Peru and one by Miguel de Cebrian, Estado actual del catolicismo ... de los naturales del Peru (1787). Among other materials concerning native peoples are nineteenth-century copies of chronicles about the Incas. One of these, Books I and II of the Memorias antiguas historiales del Peru by Fernando de Montesinos, is the only accurate copy in existence of the now lost 1642 original manuscript.

The subjects of economics and politics are also well-represented in the Yale collection. There are isolated original documents about economic affairs from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and many more from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For example, there is a 700-page collection of original documents dating from 1787 to 88 concerning shoemakers, tanners, and the leather industry in Lima. Many documents treat mining in the Andes. There are also viceregal reports, volumes of laws passed by the Royal Audience of Lima, original essays, and discussions of the economic state of the viceregal government in the eighteenth century. Among the various nineteenth-century manuscripts is one volume of original, signed letters from heroes of the South American wars of independence, including Simón Bolívar, Bernardo O’Higgins, Antonio Sucre, and José de San Martín. The collection also owns an unpublished commonplace book by José de San Martín from 1842.

Some of the South American materials in the collection fall outside any of the categories discussed. For instance, there is an original, unpublished 1677 volume of poetry by several Mercedarian friars in Lima. One particularly beautiful and valuable manuscript is a volume by José Nacio Pombo from 1794 describing Peruvian flora; this document contains many fine colored drawings of native Peruvian plants. A manuscript describing the province of Trujillo (c. 1770) by the noted Peruvian intellectual Miguel Feyjoo de Sosa is yet another example of the worthwhile finds present in this collection. The varied and important manuscripts are of considerable interest to scholars of South America.

Mexico and Central America

There are a total of fifty-one manuscript volumes concerning Mexico and Central America in this portion of the Yale University Collection of Latin American Manuscripts. Although many of these volumes contain a single text, others include multiple documents. Twenty-eight volumes consist of texts from the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries, and the rest contain nineteenth-century manuscripts.

The topics covered by the Mexican and Central American manuscripts include economics and political history, church history, and native culture. There are numerous original texts concerning the mining industry in New Spain; for example, the oldest Mexican manuscript in the collection is an original, signed essay by Augustín de Sotomayor on silver mining (1573). Many of the Mexican volumes concern viceregal policy on economic affairs, such as laws about the royal customs house or the Casa de Moneda. There are also numerous volumes of royal decrees from the late seventeenth through the early nineteenth centuries. Political matters are addressed directly in various legal texts, letters, and essays; for instance, one volume contains original, unpublished correspondence of General Augustín de Iturbide, the self-proclaimed emperor of Mexico (1822-23). Other political documents include an original essay dating to 1816 about demonstrations at Palmilla, containing sonnets and a large watercolor of Palmilla.

The importance of the Mexican manuscripts is not limited to economic and political matters. There are numerous individual documents relating to the Roman Catholic Church in Mexico as well. For example, one volume contains correspondence and papers dating to 1649 from the bishop of Puebla, Juan Palafox y Mendoza. A later volume, from 1746, consists of a Franciscan account of missionary work in Sonora, New Spain. In addition to these and other manuscripts, there are valuable materials about native Mesoamerican culture. One volume contains a grammar of Quiché Mayan written in 1774 and used by Brasseur de Bourbourg in his 1862 work on Mayan languages. An essay from 1850 by Henri Adriene Longperiet details the Mexican and Peruvian antiquities exhibited at the Louvre that year. In a manuscript written in 1773, Eusebio Ventura Beleña discusses the devastation of the native and Creole population in Guatemala caused by a recent earthquake; a large eighteenth-century watercolor map of Guatemala accompanies this text. There are other documents about native Mesoamerican peoples, including several nineteenth-century copies of earlier Mesoamerican chronicles. Although the Mexican materials do not form the largest portion of the Yale collection, they include many documents of significance to scholars.

Spain

All of the thirty-seven volumes from Spain contain materials from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. Twenty-two Spanish volumes consist of copies of royal decrees on different aspects of the administration of the Spanish colonies. The remaining manuscripts include essays on the role of the monarchy, a skillfully and profusely

illustrated emblem book by Juan de Mora (c. 1600), and a number of manuscripts from the Spanish Inquisition and from the early Jesuits in Spain. The genealogy of the Peñaredonda family, written by Juan Alfonso del Guerra y Sandoval in 1724, boasts many original paintings of Spanish coats-of-arms along with one very fine, full-sized painting of the Virgin of the Assumption.

Finally, the Yale collection possesses twenty-two volumes of manuscripts that cannot be assigned to a particular geographic area in the Hispanic world without further research. Seven volumes are from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries and include four volumes containing a great diversity of documents. These include such assorted texts as sermons, saints' lives, and descriptions of court cases. The other general volumes from this period treat government affairs and the Catholic Church. Mining, legal cases, travel narratives, military documents, essays, poetry, and other subjects are represented in the remaining volumes of nineteenth-century manuscripts.

Conclusion

The variety of documents in the Yale University Collection of Latin American Manuscripts is quite extraordinary, spanning four centuries from Mexico to Paraguay and covering topics from mining to missions. Many of the manuscripts are original and unpublished and thus can serve as the basis for research projects possible only through this collection. Years ago, as a graduate student at Yale, I found the manuscripts in this collection to be an invaluable resource for my dissertation research on early Jesuit missions in Peru. Now, as I am preparing a critical edition of the Inca chronicles of Fernando de Montesinos, the Yale collection continues to provide me with unique and irreplaceable sources of information. Primary Source Microfilm is to be congratulated for publishing these documents in a format that will allow them to be accessed easily by scholars around the world.

Using the Yale University Collection of Latin American Manuscripts for Research and Teaching

by Noble David Cook, Florida International University

Of the numerous collections of Latin American documents held privately or scattered in research libraries throughout the United States, only a handful can match the Yale University Collection of Latin American Manuscripts in quality and in size. Indeed, the manuscripts are an almost unknown and seriously underutilized resource, rich in historical evidence. Not too long ago, Laura Gutierrez-Witt of the Nettie Lee Benson Latin American Collection of the University of Texas wrote that "Spanish manuscript collections in the United States are numerous and varied, generally well-preserved but more often than not incompletely catalogued, poorly identified, and therefore abysmally unknown and inaccessible." Until recently, that was also true of the Yale University Collection of Latin American Manuscripts. Now, thanks to the efforts of numerous people, especially Primary Source Microfilm, that material is being made available in easily accessible form for scholars and students alike.

Several colonial Latin American specialists, including Karen Spalding, Steve Stern, and Ann Wightman, have known of the existence of the Yale collection and have used it briefly, but all have been hampered in their efforts by the imperfections of a long outdated and inaccurate inventory. Karen Spalding put it well when she wrote that "The Yale University Library has a wonderful collection of Peruvian colonial manuscripts, unfortunately stored away in boxes and unordered or classified." Under such conditions, the search for information was difficult, leaving potential users frustrated.

The Collection's Origins

The documents in the collection extend chronologically from the sixteenth to early twentieth centuries, ranging from manuscript boxes with individual items of varying length to several hundred volumes of bound colonial documents, both originals and copies. The core of the collection comes from three primary sources. In 1888 Yale purchased at auction from noted Cuban poet, essayist, and book collector Domingo del Monte y Aponte (1804–53) 160 rare volumes and twenty-two volumes of manuscripts, largely relating to the Spanish in the colonial Caribbean. In the early twentieth century, Yale graduate and businessman Henry Raup Wagner made several donations of manuscripts and books. In 1915 Wagner and Charles W. Harkness helped Yale acquire the massive library and document collection of Mexican historian and book collector Genaro García. Perhaps most important were the efforts of the famed "discoverer" of the Inca city of Machu Picchu, 1898 Yale graduate Hiram Bingham, to locate and purchase colonial manuscripts and books. While in Peru, Bingham was able to secure, in 1911, an unprecedented cache of documents from Francisco Pérez de Velasco. They include first-hand records from the time of the initial activities of conqueror Francisco Pizarro in the

Andes, original geographical descriptions, records of monastic orders, royal treasury account books, notarial documents, copies of royal decrees, and handwritten copies of some of the chroniclers to the essays of the precursors of Independence. Numerous other important donations and purchases have created the holdings here made available. This is truly a remarkable collection.

Access and Research

I first became acquainted with the richness of the collection in the early 1970s, as I was completing research on Peru's indigenous population in the early colonial period. Intrigued, I frequently returned to peruse the materials, always struck by how important the collection was in the context of Latin American manuscripts in the United States yet always frustrated by the weakness of the inventory. I was also appalled at how infrequently other researchers and students consulted the collection. While teaching at a nearby university, I often mentioned the collection to students. Later, as a visiting professor at Yale, I was able to more closely direct a group of students and introduce them to the joys of "archival" research, encouraging them to use the materials in their research projects and at the same time training them in paleography. Now, working at a major public university—unfortunately located hundreds of miles from important Latin American manuscript materials—I will again, through this medium, have available for my students a superb collection of primary documents.

There is ample material here for various research projects at distinct levels, ranging from a senior seminar to a master's thesis. The collection provides doctoral students with a head start on dissertation research. There are so many exciting topics that can be tackled.

Peruvian Materials

The collection's detailed records of nunneries provide ample information for a study of convent life. Through account books, one can examine the economic and social role of convents. The detailed listing of the bequests made to the Mercedarian monastery in Lima between 1541 and 73 (Series II, Box 1, folder 4, 196 folios, bound in vellum) shows the wealth and status of individuals making the gifts as well as the way the resources were used to support the work of the convent. They also provide insight into the religiosity of donors and recipients in a period in which charity eased conscience and raised the prospect of one's salvation.

A variety of documents, including royal treasury books, notarial records—wills, sales, rentals, powers of attorney, dowries—permit the researcher to systematically examine how the Spanish empire operated at the fiscal level. Records of public sales of tribute commodities in Cuzco from 1575 to 82 (Series II, Box 1, folder 3 188 folios, bound in vellum) allow the study of variations in price and royal income from Indian tribute payments. These provide a window into the economic operation of a major cathedral church, permitting students to reconstruct the economy and society at the local level.

At times the information locked within a single documentary set is so compelling that new insights into religious and social conditions can be gleaned. For example, one volume (Series II, vol. 124) contains a set of thirty or more sermons of an eighteenth-century cleric, Amaco de Espinosa. How did he view his parishioners and his surrounding society? What was he attempting to do, what obstacles did he face, and how successful was he during his years in the field? In another volume (Series II, vol. 119), we encounter transcribed testimony of witnesses who swore to the authenticity of miracles performed by the venerable virgin Doña Maria de Escobar. What does this tell us of colonial attitudes toward sanctity and the “expected” behavior of an “ideal” woman? Conversely, what does it suggest about society’s view of the less-than-perfect female? Another extensive document (donated to Yale by Hiram Bingham in 1929, 39 folios) contains the rules and outlines the activities of a confraternity of San Felipe Neri in Lima in 1809. This document provides an important model for the role of other colonial confraternities. There is a shorter report (Cuaderno no. 10) on the apparition of the baby Jesus during the Corpus Christi celebrations in the village of Eten in Trujillo, Peru, in 1649. What does this tell us of popular Christianity in the colonial Andes?

For those interested in the biographical approach, there are numerous bundles of documents related to specific individuals. There are, for example, some 250 folios (purchased for Yale by Bingham in 1911 from the Peruvian Francisco Pérez de Velasco) with the service reports and associated documents of Campmaster Luis de Arratia y Guevara, a relatively minor sixteenth-century figure. Further afield, there is the intriguing case of a legal action brought by the discoverer of the Solomon Islands in the South Pacific against two people over the ship *Nuestra Señora de la Candelaria*. This document of 270 folios covers the period 1582 to 85 (Series I, box 1, folder 10). There is the Royal Audiencia of Lima report on the state of the realm, presented to the new viceroy, the Conde de Lemos, and dated 1667 as well as the 1689 “Relación del gobierno” of Peru, prepared by Viceroy Melchor de Navarra y Rocaful, the Duque de la Palata, and a similar report of Viceroy Teodoro de Croix of 1790. The materials suggest an interesting research exercise: Compare and contrast the end-of-century official reports on the state of the realm for the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The viceregal reports are extensive enough to permit group research projects, with some students taking the issue of administration, others defense, some the Amerindian question or mining production and the state of the economy, as well as religious issues.

Mexican Materials

Although the stress has been on the South American manuscripts, Mexico is richly represented in the collection. There are, for example, some twenty volumes, part of a major collection of books and manuscripts assembled by Yale graduate and mining entrepreneur Henry Raup Wagner, of royal decrees dealing with all aspects of colonial life. One 464-page document (purchased by Yale in 1886 from George A. Leavitt) covers the province of the Nuevo Reino de León for the years 1716 to 25. This document alone provides solid material for a thesis project. Important is the 1794 report of Viceroy Juan Vicente de Güemes-Pacheco y Padilla, the Conde de Revillagigedo, to his successor. How informative it would be for students to compare and contrast conditions

in the viceroyalty of New Spain with Peru near the end of the eighteenth century, based on the two reports penned at the end of the administrative activities of their respective viceroys. There is a 218-folio "book" (from the Wagner Collection) of the San Luis Potosí, Mexico City council agreements for 1767. This document covers all aspects of life in the community and provides material for an in-depth study of local society, politics, and the economy. For students interested in pursuing environmental issues, there are numerous documents. For example, Doctor Juan Cevicos prepared a discourse on the devastating 1631 flood in Mexico City. For Peru there is a set of descriptions of earthquakes and their aftermath. For Mexican mining an 1816 text penned by Andrés Manuel del Río covers the pros and cons of different mining techniques. Particularly interesting for students of Mexican independence, a cache of material dating from 1800 to 21 has an intriguing 200 pages of original letters (also purchased in 1886 from George A. Leavitt) of the family of the Emperor Agustín de Iturbide.

Other Regions. Central America and the Caribbean

Other regions and themes are represented as well. For example, there is a review (purchased for Yale by Bingham in 1911 from the Peruvian Francisco Pérez de Velasco, 208 pages) by the Holy Office of the Inquisition of Lima of the activities of the Jesuits in Paraguay, dated 1731. Students can confront in their research the issues of the power and impact of the Inquisition, the role of the Jesuits in the mission territories, and the growing breach between royal control and the religious orders, especially the Jesuits, in Bourbon Spain.

There are documents on the Caribbean too. For example, one manuscript (Del Monte Collection, Part III, 46 pages) examines in detail the fiscal state of the Royal Company of Havana in 1758, providing good information on the economic and political situation in Cuba on the eve of the British occupation of the port. There is also some coverage of Central America. In one document (Wagner Collection) officials evaluate the pros and cons of moving the capital of Guatemala to another location after the devastating 1773 earthquake. There is a valuable 1739 review (Del Monte Collection, Part III, 26 pages) by the members of the Council of Indies of British activities along the Mosquito Coast of Nicaragua, based on a report and proposal of the so-called "King of the Mosquitos." There is relatively little documentation on this "contested area" of the Spanish empire, and researchers should find the report invaluable.

A Literary and Linguistic Tool

The manuscript collection is not useful only for historians of colonial America; it is also important for those engaged in the study of the Spanish language and literature of the period. Among other holdings, there are two sets of poems composed by a number of Mercedarian friars in Lima, Peru. The first set was completed in 1666; the second set, prepared a little over a decade later, was dedicated to the memory of Señor Don Francisco Fernández de la Cueva (Series II, box 2, folder 14). Finally, the collection constitutes an invaluable resource to assist in training students to handle the transcription

of other sixteenth- to nineteenth-century texts, with samples of writing styles that range from the easy to the very difficult.

The richness of this collection as well as its usefulness for the researcher and student cannot be overemphasized. This material constitutes an exceptional resource for any library, and it gives the student, both graduate and advanced undergraduate, a unique opportunity to conduct primary research using original documents. At last, Latin American colonialists based far from major libraries will have at their fingertips a manuscript collection that rivals those held by the principal research institutions.