The Relaciones Geograficas de Indias as Negotiated Space: A Case Study of Place-Making in Huarochiri (Lima, Peru)

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During the 16th century, the Spanish Crown moved to compile a comprehensive knowledge of its American landholdings to materialize the idea of a unified and "civilized" empire. Peninsular officials sent questionnaires to the Americas, including a request for “paintings” of the urban and natural landscape, without much detail on the project’s guidelines. The varied responses sent back to Spain are known as the Relaciones Geograficas de Indias. This presentation investigates the cultural negotiations and emerging consciousness of a new post-colonization identity among Andean communities embedded in one such painting from the Peruvian highland region of Huarochiri. By analyzing colonial-period sources, incorporating archeological research, and using spatial modeling, this talk underscores the different portrayals of space coexisting in a single map and examines how colonial tools of oppression could be appropriated – intentionally or not – as to incorporate and reinvent indigenous understandings of place, community, and identity.

Dr. Carla Hernández Garavito (Ph.D., Vanderbilt University, 2019) is a Peruvian anthropological archaeologist investigating transformations of community identity in the Central Andes through successive colonization by the Inka (1450-1532 CE) and Spanish (1532-1821 CE) Empires. She has conducted research in the Peruvian North Coast and Cusco, but her main research area is Huarochiri, in the highlands of Lima. Besides archaeology, Dr. Hernández Garavito is particularly interested in the use of historical and archival sources on archaeological research. She connects her archaeological and historical interests through spatial modeling.