On a morning in 1620, the *cacique* don Juan de Castilla entered one of the courtrooms of the Royal Audiencia of Lima, where Viceroy Prince of Esquilache awaited sitting in his velvet-cushioned chair. Also present was Father Hernando de Avendaño, one of his advisors, whose proficiency in Quechua was recognized in Lima’s official circles. The Prince of Esquilache spoke to him first. The viceroy wanted Avendaño to inquire why don Juan and his delegation had journeyed 130 miles from Lampas, the region over which don Juan presided as *cacique principal*, to oppose the granting of a license to build a textile mill (*obraje*) in their lands. Unbeknownst to His Excellency, don Juan was proficient in Castilian. Having understood the viceroy’s words to the priest, don Juan took the lead and replied in his native tongue directly, accompanying his statement with the corresponding gesture: ‘Sir, I’d rather have Your Excellency cut my head off than found the said *obraje*.’ Infuriated, Esquilache turned to Avendaño and demanded to know what the words and gestures of this fifteen-year-old native lord really meant. The priest explained: ‘Sir, what this cacique says is that it is well and good that the *obraje* be founded, even if it costs him his own head.’ Avendaño’s interpretation of the cacique’s words contradicted his intentions, but it soothed the viceroy. The priest’s translation, however, left the cacique no choice but to appeal directly to the king. The meeting between the viceroy, the priest, and the cacique eloquently illustrates the importance of official language interpreters at the highest level of the colonial administration of justice. What gives this particular encounter its unsettling tone is the absence of the audiencia’s interpreter-general for the Indians (*intérprete general de los naturales*), then sojourning at the Habsburg royal court.1

This article offers a window into the lives and careers of these interpreters-general, Indian and *mestizo* specialists who translated amid lawsuits, notarial transactions, and other judicial and administrative procedures conducted or supervised by the viceroy,
the judges of the audiencia, the public advocate for the Indians, and other high-ranking officials stationed at the viceregal court. These language interpreters represented a very small segment within the universe of interpreters that Church and state bureaucracies routinely employed in their interactions with the indigenous populations of the Andes. In the post-conquest era, language interpreters assisted local magistrates, civil and ecclesiastical judges, and public advocates for the Indians stationed in the provinces, where native parish assistants and other local intermediaries also acted as interpreters. Other audiencia interpreters, appointed on an ad-hoc basis, were dispatched alongside supreme judges (oidores) and inspectors (visitadores) officiating in tribute reassessment procedures, land-title confirmation hearings, mine inspections, and lawsuits over native chiefdoms (cacicazgos).2 The significance of the interpreters-general of the audiencia, then, did not rest on their numbers. Nor can it be explained only in terms of their language qualifications. Lima, seat of the audiencia, was a multiethnic urban conglomerate where Indian visitors and residents became fluent in, or familiar with, the Spanish language. Some of their descendants, let alone many visiting caciques such as don Juan de Castilla, would speak Castilian as their first or second language. Why would they need an official interpreter to appear before the high court of appeal?

One of the defining factors in the lives of the official language interpreters, the source from which they drew their personal influence and their identity as loyal vassals of the king, was their affiliation with the elite of ‘wielders of pen and paper’ that Ángel Rama (1986, 16–18) identified as the colonial ‘Lettered City.’ According to Rama’s original formulation, the Lettered City was the constellation of intellectuals, polemists, lawyers, judges, and notaries who produced and controlled the order of signs, writing and law included, which sustained the colonial enterprise in America. Founded on the ideology of the primacy of urban life and the written word, the Lettered City served as a privileged nexus between the Crown and its American possessions. It also structured the ways colonial actors exercised and experienced power.

In its most sophisticated form, this specialized group clustered around the viceregal palace and the chambers of the audiencia to which, as the careers of the language interpreters will show, they, along with indigenous litigants and attorneys (procuradores), had frequent access. Scholars have significantly expanded Rama’s initial formulation of the Lettered City in order to include indigenous actors. Most notably, studies of Andean literacy in Spanish and Quechua are dispelling the idea that, with very rare exceptions, native Andeans did not know how to read and write.3 Nonetheless, colonial-era literacy, especially among the educated indigenous class, went beyond the ability to read and write, for it involved also ‘a familiarity with legal precepts and formulas’ (Rappaport and Cummins 2012, 19). Thus, like many other urban Indians of their time, the interpreters-general of Lima’s court of appeal had a clear command of the Spanish language. Yet, their power also rested on their first-hand knowledge of the official language of law and empire, and their ability to create
truth in certain legal forums, a power that, following Rama’s formulation of his influential concept, made these interpreters not merely literate but also lettered.

Consequently, language interpreters associated with the audiencia and its staff of officials served as legal agents and solicitors for native leaders and communities that, like don Juan and the natives of Lampas in 1620, litigated in Lima or aspired to take their cases to the Supreme Council of the Indies in Spain. Through their daily activities, these interpreters-general brokered between the audiencia and the king’s native subjects, but they also connected indigenous groups with the Habsburg royal court, a place that some interpreters visited during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The careers of these interpreters-general illustrate the crucial roles played by some indigenous actors in the formation of the Habsburg transatlantic empire, sustained in part by the organic network of litigants, judges, lawyers, attorneys, and documents that bridged courtrooms separated by more than one large body of water. Despite recent efforts to reconceptualize indigenous history and scholarship within an imperial/Atlantic paradigm, the role played by indigenous litigants, petitioners, and legal experts in the formation of the Iberian Atlantic remains understudied. This article will show that the social position and mediating skills of some of these interpreters derived from their participation in the webs of communication and patronage that facilitated the circulation of justice and favor within the Iberian Atlantic. Officials interpreters of the audiencia occupied a ‘contact zone’ between Spanish and native worlds or societies (Adorno 2007, 23), but they also connected local and imperial scenarios. As a result, their interests, outlooks, and allegiances, their social world, in sum, came to be structured not so much along the Indian/Spanish axis but more so in terms of their physical and symbolic proximity to the ultimate source of justice and power in the Habsburg Empire: the royal court in Madrid and, by extension, the Peruvian viceregal court, its distant mirror. Lettered Lima would become a springboard from which official interpreters and other literate Andeans could imagine the universal monarchy and project the place that they had been called to occupy in it.

A Special Category of Vassal: Interpreters in Transition

Interpreters or lenguas or interpreters such as the well-known don Felipe and don Martín were instrumental during the initial conquest of the Andes. But the first official lenguas of the kingdom received their appointment after translating for governors and audiencia judges during the turbulent period known as the Civil Wars (1537–1555). For almost twenty years, loyal encomenderos and royal magistrates toured the viceroyalty and defeated the different factions of conquistadors that had risen in arms against the Crown. As the Andes transitioned from a conquest society to a colonial one, early lenguas, singled out by Spanish conquistadors and royal representatives from the group of indios amigos or indigenous ‘allies’ and ‘friends,’ also made the transition from lenguas, military assistants, and auxiliaries to encomenderos, colonizers, and, after the establishment of the royal audiencia in
1541–1542, official interpreters at the service of Lima’s viceroy, governors, and judges. These transformations were part of a much wider process in which native warriors, interpreters, and messengers across the Americas appropriated conquistador status, collectively and individually, in their efforts to secure their position as privileged native subjects of the king.7

The life and early career of Juan de Alvarado, perhaps the first native Andean to be appointed lengua of Lima’s audiencia, illustrates this pattern. Juan was an Indian of the northern Andean region of Chachapoyas and the son of a mid-ranking cacique. He was put at the service of conquistador Alonso de Alvarado at a young age, during Alvarado’s first expedition to Chachapoyas in 1535. Between 1536 and 1555, Juan served as lengua of Alonso de Alvarado and other Spanish captains and royal officials during the ‘pacification’ of the kingdom, including the breaking of Manco Inca’s siege of Lima in 1536, the conquest and settlement of Chachapoyas in 1538, and the defeat of Diego de Almagro the younger near the southern Andean city of Huamanga in 1542. Juan acted as intermediary on these occasions, convincing the natives to aid the Spaniards with warriors, gold, and silver, and ‘providing advice to the Spaniards on many things that assisted in the said pacification.’ In 1543, the interpreter journeyed to Spain with his master, then seeking royal reward. Four years later, Juan de Alvarado returned to Peru, this time as part of the entourage of licentiate Pedro de la Gasca, sent by the Crown to defeat the rebel Gonzalo Pizarro, which he did in 1548. According to Juan de Alvarado’s testimony, he served President Gasca by ‘giving him information about the land’ and by ‘persuading the Indians to do what was in His Majesty’s service.’ In 1554, during the uprising of conquistador Francisco Hernández Girón, Juan de Alvarado raised the king’s banner again—‘as I have always done’—this time to serve the judges of the audiencia as both interpreter (lengua) and captain (capitán) of the allied Indian troops. In reward of his services, the judges appointed him ‘interpreter of Indian court cases at the audiencia’ in 1555. He was still serving as such eight years later.8

Since the days of the Conquest, the legitimacy of interpreters-general such as Juan de Alvarado hinged on their loyalty and trustworthiness. Two decades later, inside the courtroom and in notarial transactions, interpreters were still expected to translate clearly and faithfully, ‘without favoring one party over the other.’9 But ‘loyalty,’ as the previous vignette shows, would be increasingly interpreted as fidelity to both language and king. Virtually all of the interpreters-general of the Audiencia of Lima in the sixteenth century came from Chachapoyas, Juan de Alvarado’s region of origin.10 Throughout the sixteenth century, native lords and communities claiming a Chachapoya origin succeeded in reinventing themselves as imperial subjects and ‘allies’ of the Spaniards, loyal to the Crown since the Conquest and subsequent Civil Wars.11 Natives from Chachapoyas and their descendants, relocated by Incas and Spaniards to different parts of the Andes, claimed lands, posts, coats of arms, and other perpetual privileges due to their siding with the Crown. Reputed to have been ‘brave people’ (gente valiente) and members of the Inca king’s personal guard, the Chachapoyas would fulfill similar posts alongside Spanish local magistrates (corregidores). In many Andean cities, Chachapoya Indians served as their personal guards,
aiding them in the administration of justice and the collection of Indian tribute. In some of these cities, the Chachapoyas alone could occupy the post of Indian bailiff (alguacil), patrolling the city and carrying the staff of royal justice, which represented their authority to administer justice in the name of the king. Chachapoya natives also guarded local jails and transported criminals and other prisoners. Capitalizing on their noble designation (nobles e hijosdalgo), many Chachapoya communities gained exemption from to tribute and corvée labor (mita), although this privilege seems to have been confined to Chachapoya groups resettled outside the province of Chachapoyas. These privileged communities could not be granted in encomienda to private individuals but only to the Crown. Throughout the colonial period, viceroys and judges confirmed the ‘nobility and purity of blood’ (hidalguía y limpieza) of some of the Chachapoya communities scattered across the Andes. As Viceroy Toledo told the king in the early 1570s, the Chachapoyas were a very special kind of Indian vassal.12

Thus, the first generation of interpreters-general secured their positions partially because of Iberian notions about the ‘natural’ fidelity of some native groups, which could extend to their faithful use of the language of the conquerors. Their fidelity, in turn, would be carried in their blood as long as it remained pure and noble. In the mid-1550s, the Cañari and Chachapoya Indians of the community of Chiara, near Huamanga, secured privileges similar to those granted to other Indian ‘allies’ in the Cuzco area. In 1568, Governor Lope García de Castro confirmed these privileges, extending them to the descendants of these Chachapoya and Cañari Indians in perpetuity. In their petition to the royal authorities, the caciques of Chiara emphasized that they had kept natives from other ‘nations’ away from their town in an effort to ‘safeguard their nobility and purity’ (guardar su hidalguía y limpieza) (Espinoza Soriano 1978, 240). As Inge Schjellerup observes, Chachapoya and Cañari Indians, though of a different ethnic origin, would be often conflated in one single category, that of friends of the Spaniards and foes of the Incas (Schjellerup 2005, 128). The 1613 census of the Indian population of Lima shows that by the early seventeenth century royal officials at the viceregal seat sometimes used the generic term cañari to classify native residents who had come originally from disparate regions such as Chachapoyas, Quito, Cuzco, Cuenca, and Huamanga, all home to Cañari and Chachapoya Indians. The census takers registered many of them as being of the Cañar ‘nation’ or ‘caste’, explaining that they were entrusted to the Crown and exempt from tribute by right of birth.13

This rhetoric of nobility and blood purity, coupled with that of good vassalage and fidelity to the Crown, would be displayed by interpreters-general of the audiencia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In 1620, the interpreter-general don Martín Çapuy—whose absence from the viceregal court was probably to blame for the linguistic misunderstanding recounted at the start of this article—declared before the Council of the Indies in Spain that he and his wife were ‘descendants of the noblest Indians of those provinces [or Peru], who have served His Majesty with utmost loyalty and good will.’14 Thanks to these language interpreters, the king could hear
and attend to the complaints and requests of the lords of the land, a royal prerogative from which peace and the good treatment of the Indians would derive. It was thanks to them, moreover, that local magistrates could administer justice to Spaniards and Indians alike. In a letter recommending don Pedro Chafo Çavana for the post of interpreter-general, the public advocate for the Indians stated that he was well acquainted with don Pedro, who ‘conscientiously and accurately’ operated in the Spanish and Indian languages and whose services ‘the local magistrates, who are ignorant of the Indian language, require in order to mete out justice to both Indians and Spaniards in civil and criminal cases.’

Rolena Adorno has noted that the use of the term ladino, as it was applied to Hispanicized Indians in Habsburg Peru, could carry positive and negative signs. Some ladinos were criticized for their perceived craftiness and deceitfulness, being portrayed as ‘zealous converts and busybodies, object[s] of suspicion and mistrust.’ Yet, as Adorno also states, the term ladino could carry a positive value. In certain contexts, ladino could allude to virtues such as prudence and sagacity, indicating proper usage and pronunciation, and cultivated speech in Castilian. Moreover, Adorno highlights the connection between language and custom. In Adorno’s words, ‘language proficiency, literacy, Christianity, and custom all converged in the concept ladino’ (Adorno 2007, 24).

In this context, linguistic expertise acted as a guarantee of successful acculturation to Spanish ways, religion included. Official interpreters of the audiencia like don Martín Çapuy would claim legitimacy and status in terms of having embraced Spanish customs, thus enjoying the privileges of this group. In 1620, Çapuy told the Council of the Indies: ‘I have always carried myself in the noblest fashion, going about dressed as a Spaniard with sword and dagger by special favor of the government.’ The ordinances for the American audiencias (1563–1565) point out that the interpreter-general should be a good Christian, the implication being that the interpreter’s Catholic conscience, his fear of God and of eternal damnation, were as important as his linguistic expertise in rendering a judicial translation true, fair, and trustworthy. As Lydia Fossa observes, however, these ordinances do not specify the interpreter’s qualifications in terms of the native languages he should know, understand, or speak. Fossa suggests that, in the eyes of the royal officials who would employ them, the familiarity of the native interpreter with the target language/culture (Spanish) mattered even more than his degree of understanding of the source language, whichever the native tongue or tongues in question might have been. In a colonial setting, Fossa argues, linguistic ‘trust’ ultimately rested within the colonizers’ own cultural context (Fossa 2006, 242, 271–73).

Fossa’s insight helps to explain the apparent paradox of appointing one or two interpreters-general to tend to the business of a bursting law court that heard dozens of cases involving caciques and communities from disparate regions of the multi-linguistic Andes. The district of the Royal Audiencia of Lima included some fifty corregimientos in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, which fell under the jurisdiction of several Spanish cities like Lima, Trujillo, Arequipa, Huamanga, and
Cuzco. The indigenous populations of this vast region spoke a variety of Quechua dialects, let alone dialects of other native languages, which must have caused difficulties for the work of the interpreters of the audiencia. From this perspective, appointing a single individual as interpreter-general of the Quechua, Puquina, and Aymara languages, as Viceroy Toledo did in 1575, seems an unrealistic expectation.20 There is at least one documented case of a formal complaint launched by the caciques of Cajamarca and Huamachuco, in the northern Andes, against the interpreters of the audiencia. In 1607, these caciques petitioned the Council of the Indies for the appointment of one Jerónimo Cansino as official interpreter, criticizing the ones stationed in Lima ‘for not knowing the language very well.’ As a result, they claimed, their cases were delayed, causing them considerable harm.21 The geographic origins of most of these native officials—the northern highlands of Chachapoyas and, in the seventeenth century, the northern regions around Trujillo and Cajamarca—raise interesting questions for future research. In which varieties of Quechua, to cite the major Andean linguistic family spoken in the territory under the jurisdiction of the Audiencia of Lima, were the interpreters proficient? Could their familiarity with certain dialects—the highly localized Chachapoyas variant, for instance—mean privileged access to the Audiencia of Lima for litigants of certain regions, ethnicities, or social statuses? Did the power of the interpreters rest on their knowledge of the variety favored by this or that Spanish judiciary?22

It seems unlikely that Lima’s early audiencia interpreters would stick to regional language varieties when translating for a law court with a huge jurisdiction. It makes more sense to think of early interpreters-general as being multilingual, proficient at least in Castilian, a regional variety of Quechua or other maternal language, and the so-called lengua general del Inca (general or common language of the Inca), which chroniclers and scholars identify as a prehispanic lingua franca, based on one or more Quechua varieties that predated the Inca expansion and that the lords of Cuzco appropriated and helped to disseminate for administrative purposes.23 According to Gérald Taylor (1985, 159), local Andean elites, including mid-sixteenth-century interpreters, were still fluent in this Quechua dialect. This was so at least until the early seventeenth century. Taylor notes that this group of privileged Andeans included not only caciques but also natives playing active roles in the colonial administration.

Official interpreters of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries seem to have relied on a lengua general, perhaps the political and administrative language of the Inca state but more likely the colonial Quechua of Spanish rule, a standard variety devised by clerics and bureaucrats for missionary purposes.24 The scant information about the Quechua used by the audiencia interpreters supports this contention. Franciscan friars who supported the proof-of-merit file of the mestizo interpreter Juan Vélez testified in 1613 that Vélez had taught Christian doctrine and the catechism to many Indian children in Jauja, his native region in the central highlands. For this purpose, Vélez translated the fathers’ sermons into the lengua general. One of the friars further declared that it ‘appeared’ to the local caciques that Vélez was a
descendant of the Incas because when they heard him talk in the language, ‘he spoke like the Incas did.’ It seems, then, that the interpreters of the Lima audiencia and the litigants with whom they interacted might have contributed to the maintenance and spread of a standard Quechua variety, adapted not only to the evangelizing efforts of the Church but also to the needs and challenges of the colonial courtroom. The colonial lengua general was clearly the ‘language of Christianity’ (Durston 2008, 55), but it might have also been the language of the law.

In sum, in the aftermath of the Civil Wars, linguistic interpretation was recast in the language of royal service, nobility, and purity of blood, as interpreters-general came to be associated not only with the pacification of the kingdom but also with the rightful administration of royal justice. In that sense, translating for the king and his representatives was a royal service that deserved reward. Increasingly cloaked in the rhetoric of vassalage and honor, the act of faithfully translating for the king became both a source of power and privilege for some educated Andeans as well as their obligation as loyal subjects. In the eyes of the Spanish officials who relied on these interpreters, it was their loyalty, the nobility of their ancestors, and their genealogical and ethnic affiliations with the indigenous ‘allies’ of the Conquest era that made their words reliable and their translations true, all within a colonial legal culture that increasingly characterized Andean natives as liars, false witnesses, and frivolous litigants.

**Within the City: Interpreters as Legal Intermediaries**

Although different opinions against the appointment of Indians as interpreters-general of Lima’s appellate court had been raised since the 1540s, Viceroy Francisco de Toledo (1569–1580) gave the post the salary and contours that would define it for the next one hundred years (Fossa 2006, 240; Ramos 2010, 119–20; Jurado 2010, 290). Indians and mestizos continued to be appointed intérpretes de los naturales during the Habsburg period. In the early 1570s, Gabriel de Loarte, chief magistrate (alcalde del crimen) of the audiencia, declared, perhaps with some exaggeration, that ‘all the lenguas of this land are either mestizos or Indians.’ In her recent study of the Christianization of death in the Andes, Gabriela Ramos has called the sixteenth-century interpreter-general ‘the most powerful indigenous official in the viceregal capital’ (2010, 192). Like many other officials, language interpreters of the audiencia owed their appointment to the viceroy. As such, language interpreters enjoyed his confidence and protection. Gonzalo Jiménez, probably a mestizo, was ‘the interpreter-general of the said viceroy [Francisco de Toledo], who treated him as a member of his household, regarding him as a man of good standing.’ Indeed, the interpreters’ ties with governors, viceroys, and other high-ranking officials of the audiencia were cloaked in the language of patronage and favor that characterized regal and viceregal courts. The interpreters’ proximity to these royal representatives sometimes appears as part of their lettered identity, as when Diego de Noreña was identified in his last will and testament as ‘interpreter-general of the kingdom, close to the person of Viceroy don Luis de Velasco.’
Interpreters were necessary for the fulfillment of one of the monarchy’s legitimizing functions, to wit, dispensing justice to the inhabitants of the kingdom. These salaried officials assisted the viceroy and his secretary in person, gaining privileged access to the viceregal chambers. They also interpreted for the justices of the audiencia who administered justice at the viceregal palace or in their private homes. Interpreters-general also aided the public advocate and the attorney-general for the Indians, key officials entrusted with the legal defense and representation of native litigants. Excluding holidays, these official interpreters attended the weekly meetings, hearings, and jail inspections of these magistrates. Along with translating in judicial settings, interpreters-general also supervised the inscription of witnesses’ testimonies, contracts, petitions, and other documents involving the participation of indigenous actors.31

Moreover, interpreters stationed in Lima or appointed there for an ad-hoc commission routinely assisted the civil judges, inspectors, and other officials who were dispatched to dispense the king’s justice. Audiencia interpreters also served in tribute reassessments, lawsuits, and land-title confirmation hearings, usually the first steps towards attaining more significant positions and, in the process, building extensive networks of patronage in the viceregal capital and beyond.32 Local and provincial interpreters, moreover, were expected to help recent appointees in their dealings with the indigenous populations of the viceroyalty. The career of the indigenous chronicler Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala illustrates this pattern. Guaman Poma received his appointment as official interpreter of the audiencia around 1594. After assisting the judge in charge of the first general land-title confirmation, he became administrator of communal funds and even public advocate (protector) for the communities of Lucanas.33 Although the post was not hereditary, certain families seem to have occupied it for one or two generations, with well-established interpreters passing the post on to sons and grandsons after decades of service.34

The interpreters’ duties and commissions translated into wealth, power, and status, placing them within the upper class of indigenous Lima. In the city, a distinct Indian elite with its own hierarchies, institutions, and practices gradually took shape. Interpreters were clearly part of it, sometimes holding positions of authority such as that of chief municipal magistrate for the Indian residents of Lima (alcalde de los naturales).35 The interpreters’ annual salary, ranging from 250 to 500 pesos, meant that they were significantly wealthier than the popular urban classes.36 Throughout the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, interpreters founded and endowed religious confraternities, owned houses and slaves in the city, and were granted indigenous laborers for their farms in the Lima Valley. They clearly distinguished themselves from the majority of Andean men and women living in the viceregal court. Gabriela Ramos (2010, 192) notes that the interpreter don Pedro Maiz was the only native among the landowners and encomenderos of Lima to be allocated Indian workers by Viceroy Francisco de Toledo. Don Sebastián Hilaquita, don Pedro’s colleague, owned a house in the city for which he and his wife paid 500 pesos. Don Diego Çolçol,
another sixteenth-century interpreter, purchased two slaves for 460 and 500 pesos, respectively, in 1597. Çolçol also owned a house in Lima.\textsuperscript{37}

The Crown usually reserved honors and privileges for the traditional indigenous nobility of the land, but viceroyals also often granted them to their lenguas. Interpreters were not caciques, at least in the restricted sense in which the Spanish courts defined such a status: Indians who, due to recognized noble ancestry and the laws of primogeniture, had inherited their fathers’ position as ‘natural lords’ of a native group since prehispanic times (Díaz Rementería 1977). Candidates with better succession rights as well as residency requisites made it difficult for interpreters to inherit a cacicazgo or the post of Indian governor that often came along with it. But interpreters were often the second- or third-born sons, grandsons, godsons, or sons-in-law of provincial and local lords. The audiencia interpreter don Pedro Maiz, for example, was married to doña Constanza Caxachumbi, the daughter of the cacique principal of Chinchaycocha, a province located in the highlands to the east of Lima. Doña Constanza would later marry don Diego Çolçol, don Pedro’s fellow interpreter in the audiencia. Don Pedro and don Diego were both from Chachapoyas; don Diego, in fact, was the cacique of Chasmal, a small polity in that region. Don Martín Çapuy, another interpreter for Lima’s audiencia, claimed to be the grandson of a cacique of Contumazá, in the northern highlands of Cajamarca. In the late 1600s, don Martín married the granddaughter of the governor of Surco, an Indian village on the outskirts of Lima. As noted by Ramos, provincial caciques ‘recognized the strategic importance that these officials enjoyed, and by marriage alliances sought to gain access to the prestige and benefits that came with their position’ (2011, 30).

Interpreters, for their part, used different mechanisms to strengthen their ties to the local and indigenous nobility, just as other members of the urban indigenous elite did. These strategies explain why they sometimes appear as caciques or \textit{principales} in the historical record.\textsuperscript{38}

The centrality of interpreters-general in the urban milieu did not derive only from their wealth and status, or from their links to Indian nobles and caciques. Their influence also stemmed from legal knowledge and procedural expertise. Audiencia interpreters often received praise for, and owed their position to, their familiarity with the laws and ordinances of the kingdom. In recommending don Pedro Chafo Çabana for the post of audiencia interpreter, for instance, the public advocate for the Indians extolled don Pedro’s command of the ‘ordinances for the protection of the natives.’\textsuperscript{39} But the interpreters’ language proficiency and first-hand knowledge of written and judicial culture were probably as sought after as their personal and professional connections. An analysis of the multiethnic networks surrounding the interpreters-general reveals a social constellation capable of articulating indigenous litigants and petitioners from Andean communities with the viceregal palace and, ultimately, with the Habsburg court. These networks can be conceptualized according to three concentric orbits: the interpreters’ region of origin, the city of Lima, and the royal audiencia that functioned inside the viceroy’s palace.
Official interpreters were migrants in a city of immigrants, a place where almost fifty per cent of the indigenous population in the early seventeenth century was of non-local origin. Prior to establishing themselves at the viceregal court, however, aspiring interpreters spent some time living in provincial cities, where they likely acquired their Castilian—or perfected it—and, just as important, familiarized themselves with urban legal and notarial culture. Some of them served as assistants and interpreters of provincial advocates (protectores) for the Indians; others acted as informal agents and solicitors, gaining the expertise that would allow them to assume the office of interpreter-general of the audiencia later.

The career of don Diego Çolçol is a case in point. As stated, don Diego was a cacique from the rural village of Chasmal, near the northern city of Chachapoyas. He appears as a resident (morador) of that city since at least January of 1587. In that month and year, as he purchased a house from an Indian hat maker, Çolçol received power of attorney from the seller to tend to his commercial and legal affairs. Indeed, don Diego appears in the notarial record as an agent of other Indian and Spanish residents, indigenous lords, and native communities interacting with each other or with the different levels of the judicial system. In August of 1587, for example, a Spanish citizen (vecino) empowered Çolçol and a merchant to collect tribute and other debts from his encomienda Indians as well as to represent him in all the civil and criminal lawsuits that might derive from these actions. In December, the Indian authorities of Chellel and Oliac, two native villages near the city, granted power of attorney for don Diego to travel to Lima and represent them before viceroy Count of Villar and the judges of the royal audiencia. Don Diego must have carried out his legal duties satisfactorily for, after returning to Chachapoyas some two years later, nine caciques gave Çolçol and the local advocate for the Indians power of attorney to request mercedes and a reduction of their communities’ fiscal duties from the viceregal authorities in Lima. During this time, don Diego Çolçol also acted as the legal agent of a local cacique. Shortly after journeying to Lima, he received his appointment as interpreter-general.

Thus, the interpreters’ links to rural kin, local communities, indigenous lords, and Spanish and Indian urban residents were not severed after moving to the viceregal court. On the contrary, colonial records show that interpreters-general continued receiving new powers of attorney after their court appointment, creating additional ties of clientage and legal representation as well as reinforcing the old ones. In May of 1592, don Diego Çolçol, now a ‘lengua and interpreter residing in the court close to His Excellency,’ received power of attorney from the Indian artisans, farmers, and retainers of the city of Chachapoyas. In February of the next year, the native lords of Leimebamba, a province under the same jurisdiction, empowered don Diego Çolçol and the attorney-general for the Indians of the city to litigate for the removal of an abusive priest and to request compensation for the priest’s excesses from the civil and ecclesiastical authorities residing in Lima. In February of 1592, don Diego Çolçol received another power of attorney, this time from doña Catalina Pilcoasa, a resident of Huamanga. The interpreter was to obtain confirmation from the viceroy and the
audiencia of the mercedes granted to doña Catalina as a direct descendant of the
former Inca kings.43

The activities of don Diego Çolçol and others reveal that interpreters-general
routinely acted as legal agents and solicitors (agentes de negocios or procuradores de
causas) at the viceregal court. Contravening royal dispositions, interpreters some-
times lobbied the judges of the high court for whom they worked and heard native
plaintiffs in their homes, penning their petitions instead of directing them to the
audiencia and the public advocate for the Indians. Interpreters also acted as legal
agents of caciques and other native leaders. Throughout the 1640s, the interpreter
Pedro Pablo served as legal agent of the cacique principal of Chinchaycocha, a
highland region some ninety miles across the Andes from Lima. Pedro Pablo could
collect debts and engage in economic transactions on the lord’s behalf, including
renting a house for the cacique’s frequent trips to the viceregal capital. Equally
important, the interpreter was to represent the cacique in any court case as well as
petition the viceroy and the audiencia for mercedes to reward the services of the
cacique and his forebears to the king.44 Interpreters also mediated in notarial
transactions among indigenous litigants and Spanish solicitors and attorneys,
although the terms of their professional agreements with the different parties,
including fees and other details, seldom appear in the record.45

Additional notarial documents further attest to Lima’s audiencia interpreters’
multiethnic networks and influence in the city. Some native residents chose them as
executors of their wills, no doubt because of their linguistic qualifications but also
because of their familiarity with the producers of legal and notarial truth.46 Members
of the lettered elite, lawyers and minor officials of the audiencia, were also part of
these networks. They appear, along with individuals of lesser status, as creditors,
debtors, and debt collectors of certain interpreters.47 The social identity of the
witnesses that certain interpreters could summon for the preparation of their
probanzas is another indicator of the extent of their alliances. Throughout the
sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, former conquistadors, local magistrates, other
interpreters, members of the viceroy’s inner circle, Spanish and Indian scribes, friars,
and native lords from surrounding provinces would all testify positively, when
needed, in favor of the interpreters-general of the audiencia.48

From their position at the symbolic center of Peru’s Lettered City, language
interpreters of the audiencia played a significant role in gaining access to the system
of justice for the native populations of Peru. Negative images of Indian litigiousness
were common currency among bureaucrats and policy makers on both sides of the
Atlantic. These images, however, should be read not as an indicator of wasteful or
malicious litigation on the part of indigenous individuals and communities. Rather,
they are a telling commentary on the frustration experienced by Crown officials as
native litigants and informal legal agents thwarted their efforts to channel these
litigating energies solely through royal courts and the fee-levying officials who
profited from the practice of the law in the colonial world. Indians constantly used
the imperial system built to provide them with judicial assistance and a special legal
jurisdiction for their legal affairs, but they also relied on a vast network of communal infrastructures, legal facilitators, specialists, and interpreters who could also operate outside the purview of royal and viceregal authorities. Interpreters-general, in turn, because of their position at the heart of the viceregal Lettered City, could entertain transatlantic ambitions, seeking royal favor and reward through proofs of merit, letters, and petitions prepared before the judges of the audiencia and later sent to the Council of the Indies. The circulation of these documents, sometimes carried across the ocean by the indigenous interpreters themselves, articulated transatlantic legal networks. Reaching the Habsburg royal court, whether on paper or in person, was also a matter of knowing the right people.

**Across the Ocean: Interpreters as Transatlantic Agents**

Some of Lima’s audiencia interpreters journeyed to the Habsburg royal court in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, increasing their social capital through the experience of the transatlantic trip. But even when they remained in the Andes, these officials acted as power brokers in an Atlantic setting. Like the native intermediaries of colonial Oaxaca studied by Yanna Yannakakis (2008, 10–11), interpreters-general in Peru connected local systems to centers of power. From this intermediate position, located at the crossroads of different interacting networks, interpreters could advance the interests of different parties—the metropolis, local officials and Spanish elites, urban Indians, native communities and their leaders—as well as their own personal aspirations by deliberately changing the emphasis, meaning, or content of the information they carried across different networks and languages.49

People and papers often reached the court from the Andes through judicial channels of communication. As stated, the professional activities of the general language interpreters secured their privileged access to the viceroy and the judges of the high court. These officials, in turn, could carry papers and petitions with them. They could also grant licenses and recommendations, even render their support to individuals attempting an unlicensed journey to the royal court, as travelers voyaging as dependents (criados) of viceroys, judges, and other local magistrates soon realized. Such was the case of don Juan Pedro Chuquival, an interpreter of the audiencia who, before his official appointment in 1593, journeyed to Spain with the governor of Cartagena.50 Interpreters like Chuquival, in turn, granted indigenous litigants and favor-seekers access to the power, influence, and protection of these magistrates in Peru and Spain. Interpreters could translate for caciques and other native authorities who, having journeyed to Lima, decided to empower friars, advocates, judges, and other individuals to act as their solicitors in Spain. In 1562, members of a prominent indigenous lineage of the Jauja Valley, through the intermediation of the interpreter-general Juan de Alvarado, empowered a judge, a Dominican father, and a third individual, perhaps a solicitor, to petition for royal grants before the Council of the Indies.51 Sometimes, interpreters-general themselves received these powers of attorney prior to departing. Petitioners and litigants entrusted them with the task
of presenting probanzas, petitions, and other documents before the Council of the Indies. While in Spain, Juan Pedro Chuquival represented the rights of his brother and nephews to a cacicazgo in the Chachapoyas region. After his two-year sojourn at the Habsburg court, Chuquival took the office of audiencia interpreter.52

Thus, relations of patronage and dependency, some of them forged at the viceroy’s palace and other spaces in lettered Lima, opened a series of opportunities for transatlantic legal brokerage. The life story of Juan Vélez, the mestizo interpreter who translated for the Franciscans of Jauja, clearly illustrates this point. In 1612, Vélez presented viceroy Juan de Mendoza y Luna, the Marquis of Montesclaros, with a ten-item proposal (diez capítulos de advertencias). In this document, he advised Montesclaros to alleviate the fiscal burden placed on different indigenous communities by regulating Indian migration to the city. He recommended holding a census so that these migrants could be identified and compelled to return to their native communities, where they would resume paying tribute. As his fellow interpreter Felipe Guaman Poma would do in his El primer nueva corónica y buen gobierno, Vélez argued in his advertencias that these measures would positively impact the welfare of the kingdom by preserving the proper social order. A marginal note in Vélez’s proposal certifies that the document was delivered to Montesclaros in person by his secretary. The viceroy would begin holding a census the following year.53

Seeking to obtain a large pension and a higher post in the colonial administration, Vélez presented the Council of the Indies not only with his proposal but also with an account of his multiple services to the king. He identified himself as one of the interpreters for the Audiencia of Lima, but he also listed former posts such as judge to the mines of Lauca (Huamanga), assistant to the inspector in a tribute reassessment of his native province of Jauja, and interim public advocate for the Indians of that jurisdiction. In a letter written to accompany his papers, Juan Vélez singled out three members of the Council of the Indies who knew him well and could vouch for him at the royal court. These individuals were a former viceroy of Mexico and Peru, an ex-president of the Audiencia of Charcas, and a former president of the Audiencia of Guadalajara. Vélez had met all of them while fulfilling his post as interpreter of Lima’s audiencia. Born in 1551, Vélez was in 1612 too old to cross the ocean. Thanks to these connections, however, his documents reached the Habsburg court that year.54

The importance of Vélez’s dossier went beyond his aims at self-promotion, showing his skills as a transatlantic intermediary. The documents presented at the royal court also served as a vehicle for many groups and interests to have the king hear their voice. The Franciscans declared in Vélez’s probanza that the interpreter had helped them and the local caciques organize an expedition to convert the ‘infidel’ Indians of the tropical lowlands to the east of the Jauja Valley and to successfully bring them under the dominion of the crown. Vélez also claimed that viceroyos and audiencia judges had relied on his legal and linguistic skills to interact with Indians and Spaniards alike. As a judge in the mercury mines of Lauca in 1577, for instance, Vélez helped royal magistrates secure a supply of native workers by talking the
Spanish miners into paying the wages they owed to the caciques providing the labor force. Two oidores had also entrusted Vélez with the duty of convincing the native authorities of Jauja to donate 200,000 pesos to the king. According to a witness of these negotiations, Vélez promised the Indian leaders that the king ‘would reward them and exempt them from serving in the mercury mines, and other promises of a similar nature.’ In the documents that reached the royal court, Vélez thus fashioned himself as someone who helped the monarchs fulfill their civilizing mission in America. Not only did he participate in the efforts at Christianizing the natives; he was also involved in procuring the funds to carry that mission forward, either in the form of gifts and donations from native communities, or by securing their labor in the mercury mines.

The native communities of Jauja, in turn, saw Vélez’s transatlantic aspirations as an opportunity to communicate with the king. After serving as interpreter in a tribute reassessment proceeding, Vélez was appointed advocate for the Indians of Jauja at the caciques’ request. Throughout his career as an audiencia official, he helped the native elite of Jauja maintain their status, obtain justice, and protect communal assets. Vélez’s ideas for colonial reform, as they were presented to Viceroy Marquis of Montesclaros in 1612, partially coincided with those of these caciques of the central Andes. In his Avisos, Vélez noted that the royal treasury would receive an extra 100,000 pesos every year by compelling Indian migrants who refused to pay tribute in Lima and other cities to return to their communities of origin. Caciques, in turn, would be relieved from having to cover the tribute and labor quotas of these absentees, thus being able to supply the mercury mines with the necessary Indian laborers. It is not difficult to see in this proposal the concerns of the caciques of Jauja and other regions affected by massive Indian migration and increasing colonial exaction.

Throughout his career, Vélez also channeled a series of ‘voluntary’ loans (empréstitos) and donations (servicios graciosos) from the native communities of Jauja to the royal exchequer, wording them in the language of royal service for which both the interpreter and these communities deserved reward. Albeit indirectly, the caciques of Jauja who testified in Vélez’s probanza reminded the Council of the Indies that their communities had provided the Crown with copper bullets, 800 pikes, and 6,000 lengths of rope to fight English pirates and corsairs as well as with hundreds of thousands of pesos from their communal coffers. These indirect reminders were part of a larger campaign, carried out by these indigenous leaders in Peru and in Spain, to receive privileges, compensation, and exemptions for services rendered during the Conquest and pacification of the kingdom. Exemption from draft work at the mercury mines, the caciques’ main aspiration, never materialized, but Vélez did try to convince the viceroy of the need to alleviate these levies in his 1612 proposal. Thanks to Vélez’s negotiations with the royal authorities, the communities of Jauja secured not only a public advocate of their liking, but also the privilege of seeing the Spanish administrators of their community funds replaced by a native administrator.
Conclusion

Understanding how indigenous peoples impacted Habsburg state-building processes in the Americas requires that we consider the role played by legal intermediaries such as the interpreters-general of the Audiencia of Lima. The words of men such as Juan Vélez informed the hundreds of legal petitions and witnesses’ testimonies that scholars have mined in search of native perspectives on colonial life. Beyond these interpreters’ linguistic expertise, however, the larger world of social relations and mediating activities that they built in the city articulated native communities and leaders with the viceregal and royal courts. These official interpreters granted indigenous subjects access to various law courts, to networks of patronage, and to formal and informal legal services that are key to understanding native experiences with the royal system of justice.

Over the past forty years, scholars have struggled to interpret the precise social role and position of indios ladinos such as the interpreters-general described in this article. Andean scholarship has gradually shifted from presenting ‘acculturated’ natives as ambivalent subjects ‘suspended’ or even ‘lost’ between two ‘social worlds’—the Indian and the Spanish—to seeing them as vital intermediaries whose command of Castilian helped bridge the gap between these two ‘cultures’. Despite these significant contributions, the Indian/Spanish model still dominates the way scholars of the Andes write about indigenous intermediaries. In his recent analysis of native assistants to the Andean Church, however, John Charles calls for ‘the combination of Spanish and indigenous viewpoints into a single framework of analysis’ (2010, 25). The old paradigm, no doubt a useful device to sort out the very complex arrangements that characterized colonial society, has started to reveal its limitations, especially when applied to indigenous and mestizo subjects who, like the interpreters-general of Lima, lived in urban centers. There, people of different ethnicities lived alongside each other, sometimes under the same roof, and transculturation occurred in manifold daily encounters.

More importantly, did early colonial Lima’s interpreters-general see themselves as mediating between the two ‘worlds’ or ‘cultures’ traditionally identified as ‘Indian’ and ‘Spanish’? Is there a different framework within which to understand the worldview of literate Andeans placed in positions of authority? Indigenous authors such as Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, in Peru, and Domingo Chimalpahin, in Mexico, clearly thought of the kingdom of the Indies as part of a much larger world, organized under the principle of a universal monarchy. Based on his extensive readings, Guaman Poma divided the world into four parts: Europe, the New World, Asia, and Africa. Rome was the capital of the world and Philip ruled over a universal kingdom. The ‘universal world,’ as Guaman Poma calls it, consisted of a commonwealth of nations under the sovereignty of Christian and non-Christian princes, with Philip presiding over many kings as ‘supreme prince and emperor.’

Literate Indians like Guaman Poma understood the global nature of the Spanish empire, crafting their projects for colonial reform within a larger world shaped by early modern Iberian ideals of kingship, justice, law, and royal service. Official interpreters belonged to this group inasmuch as they saw themselves as loyal vassals who played a key role in
sustaining the monarchical order. After all, the proper exercise of justice, for which language interpreters were indispensable, became the footprint of the king’s domain over the newly conquered lands. The position of these state-appointed interpreters within colonial society must have influenced the way they conceived of their situation as imperial subjects of a much larger entity. In that sense, it was perhaps the notion of the Atlantic empire, more so than that of an Indian/Spanish dichotomy, that organized the ways they understood how Indians, Spaniards, and other ‘nations’ interacted, or should interact, in the Andes.

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Notes

1 ‘señor primero me corte la caueza vuestra excelencia que fundare el dicho obraje’; ‘señor lo que dice este caçique es que se funde el obraje norabuena aunque le cueste la caueça.’ The scene, as told by one of the lawyers (abogados) of the audiencia, is included in Archivo General de Indias (AGI), Lima, 157 [1626], f. 36r–v. For an overview of Hernando de Avendaño’s career as extirpator of idolatries and the author of a collection of sermons in Quechua, see Guibovich 1993, and Hampe Martínez 1999. For his role as religious advisor to the Prince of Esquilache, see Vargas Ugarte 1954, 153–54. All translations are mine. I have chosen to translate the titles of intérprete general and intérprete mayor as ‘interpreter general’ and ‘chief interpreter,’ respectively. The adjective ‘general’ does not refer to the language or languages being translated but to the higher rank of these audiencia officials among other government-appointed interpreters, a situation akin to that of the protector general de los naturales (public advocate for the Indians) and the procurador general de los naturales (attorney-general for the Indians), who presided over local and provincial advocates and attorneys for the natives of the kingdom.

2 Native interpreters who worked for the secular administration have deserved little attention. About indigenous interpreters and translators in colonial Peru, especially the lenguas of the Conquest period and the native parish assistants who acted as such, see Adorno 1991a, 1991b, 2000; Busto 1965; Estenssoro 2003; Fossa 2006; Jurado 2010; Lockhart 1972, 450; Seed 1991; Solano 1977. A recent discussion of the language interpreter of the audiencia can be found in Ramos 2010 and 2011. Kathryn Burns’s recent piece on the bilingual indigenous notaries of
Cuzco also deserves citation. Especially in rural settings, these notaries acted as interpreters for some of their clients (Burns 2011).

3 See Burns 2010; Charles 2007, 2010; Dueñas 2010; Rappaport and Cummins 2012. For works that address the existence of private letters and legal and administrative documents written or dictated by natives in colonial Quechua or Spanish, see Charles 2010, especially the introduction; Itier 2005; Durston 2003, 2007, 2008.

4 For classic discussions of the natives’ engagement with the legal system in the Andes, see Spalding 1984, and Stern 1993. Recent works about Indian access to judicial courts include Poloni-Simard 2005, and Honores 1993, 2003, 2007 and 2009. These studies discuss the system of legal protection, including the appointment of public advocates and attorney-general for the Indians, devised to channel indigenous litigation and legal agency, as well as the emergence of a legal culture in colonial Peru and its transatlantic connections with the ‘legalistic’ revolution in Spain. I have also benefited from a group of excellent works devoted to Indian access to justice in colonial Mexico, in particular, Baber 2001, Borah 1983, Cutter 1986 and 1995, Owensby 2008, Yannakakis 2008.


7 About the different roles of ‘Indian Conquistadors’ in Mesoamerica see the essays included in Matthew and Oudijk 2007. The classical works on indigenous ‘allies’ in the conquest of the Andes are still those of Waldemar Espinoza Soriano (1967, 1976, 1981), but the topic deserves much more study. For a critique of Espinoza Soriano’s paradigm about Huanca, Chachapoya, Cañari, and other Indian ‘allies’ of the Spaniards in the Andes, see Puente Luna 2011.

8 ‘muchos abisos de muchas cosas que conbiieron para la dicha pacificación’; ‘dando noticia al dicho presidente Gasca de toda la tierra’; ‘especialmente en persuadir a los yndios lo que tenían que hacer en servicio de Su Magestad’; ‘a servir a Su Majestad como siempre lo he hecho’; ‘lengua para los negocios de los Indios de la Audiencia.’ Juan de Alvarado recounts these events in two documents, his 1555 certified proof of merits and deeds (probanza de méritos y servicios) prepared before Lima’s high court of appeal and his undated account (relación) of the events of conquest of the Chachapoyas, probably drafted around the same time. This account, written in the first person, was likely dictated by Alvarado himself to a scribe in Lima. The purpose of the document was to secure Juan his native town and Indian parcialidad in encomienda. AGI, Lima, 204, n. 23 [1555]; AGI, Patronato, 28, r. 56 [n.d.]. The direct quotes come from these two documents. Juan de Alvarado acted as official interpreter in a lawsuit adjudicated by the audiencia in 1563 (Rostworowski 1988, 93). For the similar career of don Martín de Poechos, lengua of the Pizarro brothers in the 1530s, see Busto 1965. Martín journeyed with Pizarro to Spain in 1529 and then received a plot of land (solar) in Lima, a coat of arms, and an encomienda. He served Governor Cristóbal Vaca de Castro as interpreter, as did another Indian ‘fluent in the Castilian language’ (‘indio ladino en lengua castellana’) named Pedro de Escalante (Biblioteca Nacional de España [BNE]. Ms. 2010 [¿1543/1608?], f. 45v). After siding with the ‘rebels’ during the Civil Wars, Don Martín lost favor and was exiled with his family to Panama.

9 ‘clara y abiertamente, sin encubrir cosa alguna, diciendo simplemente el dicho delito o negocio y testigos que examinaren, sin ser parcial a ninguna de las partes, y sin favorecer más a uno que a otro’ (Sarabia Viejo 1989, 97–100; Solano 1977, 271; BNE, Ms. 2987, ff. 44v–46r). In Mexico, the interpreter-general of the General Indian Court was called nahuatlatoi, or ‘clear speaker’ (Osowski 2010, 137). The practice of appointing two interpreters at the Audiencia of Lima, probably well established by the 1570s, reinforced this ideal. Language interpreters were to translate separately from each other so that notaries could crosscheck their assertions (Solano 1977, 271; BNE, Ms. 2987, ff. 44v–46r). For the appointment of two interpreters at the Audiencia of Charcas, see Jurado 2010, 296.
I have documented the following interpreters-general for the natives, all of them Indians from Chachapoyas residing in Lima and active in the audiencia between the 1550s and the 1590s: Juan de Alvarado, Pedro Maiz, Diego Noreña (a mestizo?), Diego Colcól, and Juan Pedro Chuquival. A noteworthy exception is Don Sebastián Hilaquita, the grandson of Inca Atahualpa, a native from Cuzco or Quito working as interpreter-general of the Lima Audiencia in the 1580s. I have not identified the place of origin of the following sixteenth-century interpreters: Martín Pizarro, Alonso Pacheco, and Diego Ticayo. In the seventeenth century, interpreter-general like don Martín Çapuy and don Pedro Chafo Çavana had moved to Lima from Northern Peru, more specifically, the regions surrounding the cities of Trujillo and Cajamarca.

Juan de Alvarado notes in his account of the conquest of the Chachapoyas, however, that not all of the local lords and groups sided with the Spaniards. Many chachapoyanos—the term of self-identification used by the interpreter—remained loyal to the local Inca governor. AGI, Patronato, 28, r. 56 [n.d.].

See Toledo’s letter to the king, dated 24 September 1572, in which he writes, ‘seran estos yndios [yanaconas or retainers] de aqui [Cuzco] hasta cinco mill yndios de los quales ay aqui tres suertes de los que no pagauan tributo […] la segunda manera de yndios son los cañares y chachapoyas que escreui que estauan para el seruicio y guarda desta cibdad como quinientos según a constado por la visita de estos se dejan la mitad para el dicho seruicio sin tributo como antes cargandoles de estrahordinario la guarda y custodia de la fortaleza’ (Levillier 1921–1926, 4:433–35). For the privileges awarded to the Chachapoyas in Quito, Lima, Cuzco, Huamanga, and other Andean cities, see Dean 1999, 186–92; Espinoza Soriano 1967; Espinoza Soriano 1978; Schjellerup 2005, 126–29.

Nación; casta. See Contreras 1968, 132, 191, 231, 512. According to Viceroy Toledo, the Cañari Indians of Cuzco were a group that included ‘another two hundred Indians of different nations’ (‘otros dozientos [indios] de otras naziones’) (Levillier 1921–1926, 4:119–20). Prevailing views about ‘friendly Indians’ (indios amigos) benefited the careers of interpreters of other groups of Andean allies. Don Francisco Guanca, likely from the ‘allied’ Huanca group in the central Andes, acted as interpreter in the proof of merit and service of the sons of Inca Atahualpa, prepared in Cuzco in 1554 (Oberem 1976, 53). Three years later, Diego de Cañar, most likely a Cañar Indian, interpreted in a lawsuit for the encomienda of Curacullu, in Huaylas (Varón Gabai 1997, 174).

‘el y la dicha su mujer son deçendientes de los indios mas prinçipales de aquellas probinçias que con mas lealtad y boluntad an acudido al serbiçio de VMg,’ AGI, Lima, 150 [1620]. Similar discourses would become available to caciques of traditional noble lineages from the second half of the sixteenth century onwards.

‘por conocer en el [Don Pedro] verdad, conciencia y fidelidad en la version de lo español y indio de que necesitan los que ban honrrados por Corregidores que ignoran la lengua india para exercer las acciones de Justicia con indios y españoles así en lo ciuil como en lo criminal,’ AGI, Lima 26 [1670]. The 1548 encomienda grant of Juan Diez de Betanzos, chief interpreter and author of the Suma y narración de los Incas [1551–1557], draws this connection between language interpretation and the good treatment of the natives: ‘[…] servistes a su mag[es]t[ad] en ser lengua del gouernador Vaca de Castro mediante lo qual tomaua entendimiento de qualquier negoçio y cossas de lo que los señores naturales destos rreynos con el querian negoçiar e negociauan para sosiego e quietud e buen tratamiento dellos’ (Domínguez Faura 2008, 158).


‘siempre e tratado mi persona con mucho lustre andando en hauito despañol con espada y daga por merced particular del gouierno,’ AGI, Lima, 150 [1620].

See Fossa 2006, 239–40, 270–73, and Jurado 2010, 289–90. A few years later, Viceroy Toledo would make a similar demand in his instruction for the appointment of lenguas during the General Inspection Tour of the Viceroyalty. Toledo ordered the inspectors to appoint lenguas who were ‘well-informed, Christian, loyal, and trustworthy; incapable of favoring the Indians or
the Spaniards’ (‘entendidas y xptianas y de fidelidad y confianza, que no sean sospechosos ni favorables a los indios ni a los españoles’) (Romero 1924, 129). Gérald Taylor (1985) cites a 1542 official letter advocating the appointment of Spanish interpreters in lieu of indigenous ones: ‘al ynterprete español darse le a credito en lo que dixiese, por el juramento que del se rrecibiria, y esta autoridad no tendra lo que declarase al ynterprete natural, aunque tenga agua de baptismismo, por que no tiene asy la fee ni el temor de Dios con el gusto e sabor del español, que lo mamó en la leche.’ Evidently, other Spanish officials would disagree, appointing Christian Indians as interpreters in the following decades.

The Audiencia of Lima shared borders in the north with the Royal Audiencia of Quito, in the south with the Royal Audiencia of La Plata or Charcas, in the west with the Pacific Ocean, and in the east with the unexplored provinces of the Peruvian jungle (Recopilación 1680, Bk. 2, Tit. 15, Law 5).

Sarabia Viejo 1989, 97–100. Toledo’s provisions for this post are based on the 1563–1565 ordinances, already cited. Jurado (2010, 301) discusses the case of don Pedro de Dueñas, an interpreter of the Audiencia of Charcas, ‘ladino entrambas lenguas aymara y quechua.’

‘aunque [los intérpretes] deuieran acudir a sus ofícios con puntualidad por no sauer bien la Lengua o por otros casos que subcaden se nos dilatan Las caussas de manera que Resceuimos daño,’ AGI, Lima, 138 [1607]. Viceroy Marquis of Mancera made Don Pedro Chafo Çabana interpreter for the audiencia after the natives of the town of Lambayeque, Chafo’s place of birth, complained that the current interpreter, an ‘outsider Indian’ (indio forastero) chosen by the local magistrate, was not apt for the post. AGI, Lima, 171 [1660]; AGI, Lima, 26 [1670].

In a recent contribution, Gabriela Ramos (2011, 31) raises similar questions about the role played by indigenous interpreters in Lima’s multilingual and multicultural milieu. For the languages spoken in Chachapoyas and the Northern highlands at the time of the Conquest, see Durston 2003, 210; 2008, 53; Schjellerup 2005, 51–52, and the essays included in Taylor 2000.

About this lengua general del Inca o lengua general del Cuzco, see Durston 2003; Fossa 2006, 225–35; Itier 2011; Taylor 1985.

Lengua general is a problematic category insofar as it suggests a standard that has not yet been fully established (Durston 2007; 2008, 109–10; Itier 2011; Taylor 1985). Alan Durston (2008, 46) defines Standard Colonial Quechua as ‘a literary standard based on the Quechua of the Cuzco region, which was codified and disseminated by the Catholic Church beginning in the 1580s.’ César Itier (2011, 65), in turn, suggests the existence of a standard colonial Quechua which resulted ‘from a process of ‘koineization’ among various distinct Quechua dialects or speech forms in urban contexts (Huancavelica, Huamanga, Potosí) that brought together populations of diverse origins.’ Scholars still debate the relationship between the prehispanic lingua franca of the Inca Empire with that spoken by the Inca elite, sometimes called lengua imperial or cortesana. Another point of contention is the relationship between the prehispanic lengua general del Cuzco and the colonial lengua general or Standard Colonial Quechua.

‘siempre desde su mocedad en poner en la lengua general muy particularez sermones para la declaracion de santo euangelio’; ‘cuando oyan hablar al dicho Joan Nuñez en la lengua las parescia que era desendiente de yngas por que hablaba como ellos.’ Vélez was the illegitimate son of Julián Vélez, an obscure Spaniard from Extremadura, and doña María Ñusta Vello, a purported daughter of Emperor Huayna Capac. AGI, Lima, 145 [1615].

For similar negative views about mestizos, see Ares Queija 1997. Archbishop Jerónimo de Loayza, on the other hand, was of the opinion that native interpreters should indeed assist the public advocates for the Indians (Olmedo Jiménez 1990, 241). Negative views about Indians as interpreters might help to explain the appointment of Spaniards and mestizos to the post of interpreter of the high court of appeal. Writer-interpreter Juan Diez de Betanzos appears as chief interpreter (intérprete mayor) of the audiencia in a power of attorney dated in Lima in 1566. AGN, Protocolos Notariales (PN), 38, Juan García Tomino [1566], f. 804r–v. In 1557, Viceroy Marquis of Cañete had appointed Betanzos to serve as the interpreter in a diplomatic embassy.
dispatched to Vilcabamba, seat of the autonomous Inca state that would survive until 1572. Betanzos had served as an interpreter since the early 1540s in Cuzco and, probably, in Lima (Domínguez Faura 1994; 2008; Fossa 2006, 294–302; Mannheim 2008). Diego de Noreña, interpreter general of the kingdom (interprete general de este reino) in the 1590s, was likely the mestizo son of Juan de Noreña, a Spanish merchant who traded between Trujillo and Chachapoyas in the late 1570s. As was common among the first generation of mestizos, Diego’s last will and testament omits the testator’s ethnicity and the identity of his mother, probably a Chachapoya woman. Archivo Regional de Amazonas (ARA), PN, 4, Baltasar Ortiz [1578], ff. 88r–89v.

27 ‘todos los lenguas que en esta tierra hay o son mestizos o indios’ (Levillier 1935–1940, 1:384).

28 For examples of interpreter-general appointed or confirmed in their posts by the viceroy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, see Levillier 1921–1926, 14:62, and AGI, Lima, 171 [1660].

29 ‘El dicho Gonzalo Jiménez era lengua general del dicho señor Visorrey, y le tenía en su casa por tal y persona de buena opinión.’ Prior to serving Toledo, Jiménez worked as lengua for Licentiate Castro and the judges of the audiencia as well as ‘in other ecclesiastic and secular law courts’ (‘y en otras Audiencias eclesiásticas y seglares’) (Levillier 1935–1940, 1:384).

30 ‘Diego Denoreña ynterprete general deste Reyno cerca de la persona del señor virrey Don Luis de Belasco.’ AGN, PN, 61, Francisco González de Balcázar [1601], ff. 74v–44v. Witnesses in the información of the interpreter Juan Vélez declared that the viceroy García Hurtado de Mendoza, the Marquis of Cañete (1589–1596), ‘trusted him very much’ (‘le tenia mucha confianza’). AGI, Lima, 145 [1615].

See the laws included in Recopilación (1680, Bk. II, Tit. 29) and the ordinances compiled by Viceroy Marquis of Montesclaros in 1611. BNE, Ms. 2987, ff. 44v–46r. See also Viceroy Toledo’s 1575 ordinances regarding the interpreter-general of Quechua, Aymara, and Puquina (Sarabia Viejo 1989, 97–100). About interpreters aiding the public advocate for the Indians, see Bayle 1945, 109–10; Ruigómez Gómez 1988, 86, 144. For the duties of the interpreters of the General Indian Court of Mexico City, see Borah 1983; Osowski 2010.

31 See also Viceroy Toledo’s 1575 ordinances regarding the interpreter-general of Quechua, Aymara, and Puquina (Sarabia Viejo 1989, 97–100). About interpreters aiding the public advocate for the Indians, see Bayle 1945, 109–10; Ruigómez Gómez 1988, 86, 144. For the duties of the interpreters of the General Indian Court of Mexico City, see Borah 1983; Osowski 2010.

32 For examples of audiencia interpreters commissioned to serve in the provinces adjacent to Lima, see Guillén Guillén 1974; Rostworowski 1988, 276. The career of Juan Vélez, which I discuss later, is another case in point.

33 Adorno 1993; Ossio 2008; Puente Luna 2008; Puente Luna and Solier Ochoa 2006.

34 During the 1630s and 1640s, different viceroyos appointed and confirmed don Pedro Chafo Çavana as interpreter of the jurisdiction of Lambayeque, on the North Coast. Don Pedro’s father and grandfather had fulfilled the office since the times of the Prince of Esquilache (1615–1621). Chafo Çavana and Martín Çapuy, another interpreter, requested the post of interpreter-general of the audiencia in perpetuity, along with the right to bestow it upon their successors. Apparently, Juan Vélez bequeathed his post to his son, as one Juan Vélez appears as interpreter in the late 1620s. AGI, Lima, 26 [1662–1670], AGI, Lima, 150 [1620]; AGI, Lima, 161 [1633], f. 44v.


36 Salary figures are based on the following documents, arranged chronologically: AGN, PN, 61, Francisco González de Balcázar [1600], ff. 289r–90v [Diego de Noreña]; Contreras 1968, 338 [Martín Çapuy], Archivo Vargas Ugarte, vol. 32, doc. 31 [1639], f. 52r–v [don Alonso de Vega]; Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, Ms. B285 and B366 [1686; don Pablo Fernández Culquiruna]. Indian and mestizo interpreters in mid-seventeenth Cuzco received ¼ of a peso for each witness’s testimony translated from the lengua general into Castilian. AGI, Lima, 187, n. 103 [1652]. For the salaries of the native interpreters of the Audiencia of Charcas, see Jurado 2010, 303.
37 AGN, Real Audiencia, Causas Civiles, l. 8, c. 44-A [1585]. AGN, PN, 14, Francisco Ramiro Bote [1597], ff. 2004r–5r; AGN, PN, 56, Rodrigo Gómez de Baeza [1597], f. 40r–v; AGN, PN, 22, Rodrigo Alonso Castillejo [1599], ff. 212v–14r.

38 Don Juan de Alvarado was the son of Tomallaja, ‘curaca e principal’ of Cochabamba upon the arrival of the Spaniards in Chachapoyas. AGI, Lima, 204, n. 23 [1555]. A last will and testament prepared in the outskirts of Lima in 1577 identifies the interpreter don Pedro Maiz as a cacique (Lowry 1991, 136–37). About the family ties of don Pedro Maiz and don Diego Çolçol with the caciques of Chinchaycocha, see the detailed analysis presented in Ramos (2010, 191–93; 2011, 29–30). The 1613 census of the native population of Lima identifies don Martín Çapuy as the grandson of don Sebastián Cingon, cacique of Contumazá, while a probanza prepared in 1617 makes him the son of Don Pedro Çapuy ‘natural y cacique principal’ of Contumazá. AGI, Lima, 150 [1620] and Contreras 1968, 338. Don Pedro Chafo Çavana called himself an ‘indio principal.’ AGI, Lima, 26 [1662–1663; 1670].

39 ‘ordenanças pertenecientes a los indios’. AGI, Lima, 171 [1660]; AGI, Lima 26 [1670].

40 Lima’s population in 1614 was estimated at 22000 inhabitants. Its growing Indian population, in turn, was estimated at 2000 individuals, not including some 3000 temporary workers (mitayos), drafted from twelve provinces within Lima’s administrative district. In the 1620s, the number of mitayos decreased to 1200 (Charney 2001, 11–14; Contreras 1968; Lowry 1991, 68, 177).

41 This pattern is consistent with the more general pattern of Indians migrating to Lima. In his analysis of the 1613 census of the Indians of the city, Paul Charney has found that over a quarter of all native migrants had moved there directly from important provincial cities. According to Charney, 95% of the Indian population of Lima was made of immigrants (Charney 1988, 7; 2001, 12).

42 ARA, PN, 12, Gonzalo Sánchez Delgado [1587], ff. 23r–v, 24r–v, 188r–v, 225r–v; ARA, PN, 15, Gonzalo Sánchez Delgado [1590], f. 60r–v; ARA, PN, 15-A, Juan de Orduña [1590], f. 1r–v. The governor of Chellel and Oliac was don Cristóbal Chuquimis Çolçol, clearly a relative of don Diego Çolçol, who appears in some of these documents as cacique principal of Chasmal. For Çolçol’s appointment as interpreter, see Levillier (1921–1926, 14:62). The career of Diego Noreña fits a similar pattern. Between the late 1570s and the early 1590s, Spanish residents and encomenderos of Chachapoyas as well as indigenous communities empowered him, sometimes along with a solicitor (procurador de causas), for litigating and requesting mercedes on their behalf in Lima. In October of 1594, a citizen (vecino morador) granted power of attorney to Noreña, to Leandro de la Reinaga Salazar, who was one of the advocates of the audiencia, and to Pedro Cano, a solicitor at the audiencia. They were to request mercedes from Viceroy Marquis of Cañete. ARA, PN, 20, Gonzalo Sánchez Delgado [1594], ff. 190v–91r. For Reinaga’s career as advocate and attorney for the Indians, see Honores 2007, esp. ch. 5.

43 ‘lengua ynterprete que estais y residis en la corte aserca de su Excelencia.’ ARA, PN, 18, Gonzalo Sánchez Delgado [1592], ff. 83r–84r; ARA, PN, 19, Gonzalo Sánchez Delgado [1593], ff. 44r–45r; AGN, PN, 23, Diego de Córdoba Maqueda [1592], f. 198v.

44 AGN, Títulos de Propiedad, l. 31, c. 602 [1640s], ff. 74r–83r. In 1593, don Gonzalo Vilca Capcha, cacique principal of Huamantanga, gave power of attorney to Diego Ticayo, ‘interpreter for the Indians under the jurisdiction of the audiencia’ (‘lengua de los naturales desta Real Audiencia’) to tend to the cacique’s lawsuits (pleitos) and court cases (causas) AGN, PN, 1, Cristóbal de Aguilar Mendieta [1593], ff. 227r–28r.

45 Between March and July of 1562, the interpreter don Juan de Alvarado mediated between different caciques of the Chachapoyas region and well-known official advocates and solicitors of the audiencia. AGN, PN, 127, Esteban Pérez [1562], ff. 324r–v, 799r–v; 893v–94r. The caciques empowered licentiate Falcón, advocate of the audiencia, and Antonio Bello and Juan Sánchez de Aguirre, solicitors of the high court. Interpreters of ecclesiastical courts engaged in similar activities as agents and solicitors. Juan Falen, interpreter for the archbishop, acted as witness in a
power of attorney given by don Luis Pablo, the son of the cacique of Culpas, in the region of Yauyos, to the east of Lima, to a solicitor of the audiencia. The solicitor was to obtain confirmation of don Luis Pablo’s cacique title and secure the patrimony associated with it. AGN, PN, 127, Esteban Pérez [1562], f. 999r–v.

Ramos 2010, 184 n.84. Ramos (2010, 186–87) finds that, when it came to selecting these executors, the tendency among the natives living in Lima and Cuzco was to appeal ‘to people in a responsible and trustworthy position.’

The chief officer (oficial mayor) owed interpreter Diego de Noreña more than 150 pesos in 1601. The previous year, Noreña gave power of attorney to Joaquín de Aldana, public advocate for the Indians, and to Leandro de la Reinaga Salazar, the aforementioned advocate, to collect the salary owed to him. After Noreña’s death, Reinaga Salazar empowered the interpreter’s wife to collect a debt from a resident of Chachapoyas, then residing in Lima. AGI, PN, Francisco González de Balcázar, 61 [1600–1601], ff. 289r–90r, 338r–v, 742v–44v, 768r–v.

Juan Vélez’s 1613 probanza is based on the testimonies of Lima’s royal factor, the chief bailiff (alguacil mayor) of the city, and several members of the indigenous elite of the Jauja province, among other witnesses. AGI, Lima, 145 [1615]. For his 1617 probanza, Martín Çapuy relied on testimonies by native lords and authorities of the cabildo and a cofradía (religious brotherhood) of the town of Surco as well as on the declarations of three Spanish notaries of the audiencia. AGI, Lima, 150 [1620].

Both Yannakakis’s and my understanding of brokers are based on the work of Daniel Richter (1988) about Iroquois-Dutch-English relations in the seventeenth century. Richter argues that intermediaries maintained their position as long as they could ‘promote the aims of one or more groups while protecting the interests of another, and thus become indispensable to all sides’ (Richter 1988, 41; see also Yannakakis 2008, 11). The literature on cultural and power brokers in North America is extensive. For a good overview, see Davis 1996. For specific case studies, see Hagedorn 1988; 1995; Hosmer 1997; Sweet 2005; Szasz 1994; White 1991.

AGI, Contratación, 5241, n. 2, r. 42 [1593]. In 1611, Andrés, an Indian from Cuzco, reached the court while serving Don Juan de Villela, former oidor of Lima appointed to the Council of the Indies. AGI, Contratación, 5332, n. 23 [1613].

AGN, PN, 127, Esteban Pérez [1562]. f. 970r–v.

ARA, PN, 9, Baltasar Ortiz [1584], f. 163r–v; AGI, Contratación, 5241, n. 2, r. 42 [1593]; AGI, Lima, 132 [1595]; AGI, Indiferente, 1963 [1546], l. 9, f. 354r.

AGI, Lima, 143 [1613]; AGI, Lima, 145 [1615]. The marginal note reads, ‘Presentose el traslado de estos diez capitulos de aduertençias Ante el exmo. Señor Marques de Montesclaros virrey de estos Reynos del Piru en quince dias del mes de octubre de mil y seiscientos y doce años por mano de don Alonso fernandez de Cordoua secretario del gouiero y el dicho señor marques se quedo con ellos y con el memorial.’

Viceroyos and oidores frequently advanced to membership on the councils of Castile or the Indies, after serving for a few years in the New World (Schäfer 1935, 352). As is well known, Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala used a similar strategy to deliver his Nueva corónica to the viceroy. In a letter addressed to the Council of the Indies in 1615, Guaman Poma excused himself for not sending his work in the outgoing royal fleet. He offered, however, to deliver it to the new viceroy, should the councilors request it so. In his letter, the chronicler pointed at Viceroy Luis de Velasco, whom he had probably met in person around 1596, as someone who could attest in Spain to the quality of his services and lineage. AGI, Lima, 145 [1615].

‘por promesas que les hacia de que Su Mags. Les haria merçedes y Les reserbaria del Seruicio de las minas de sogue y otras cosas a este modo.’ AGI, Lima, 145 [1615], f. 9r–v.

Some of the essential works on the topic of ladinos and indigenous acculturation and mobility are Adorno 1991a; Charles 2010; Estenssoro 2003; Graubart 2009; Poloni-Simard 2006; Saignes 1987; Spalding 1970; 1984; Stern 1993.
Bibliography


