

With this issue, the editors of *The Americas* introduce the Review Essay. These essays allow invited scholars the space and latitude to discuss two or more recently published works on a selected topic. Reviewers assess the collective contributions to a field, innovative perspectives, new knowledge, range of sources, and methods of interpretation.

EXTENDING CONQUEST HISTORY: *Lesser-Known Events and the Fringes of European Conquest*

Death in the Snow. Pedro de Alvarado and the Illusive Conquest of Peru. By W. George Lovell. Montreal, Kingston (ON): McGill, Queen's University Press, 2022.

This Incurable Evil: Mapuche Resistance to Spanish Enslavement, 1598–1687. By Eugene C. Berger. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2023.

German Conquistadors in Venezuela: The Wëlsers' Colony, Racialized Capitalism, and Cultural Memory. By Giovanna Montenegro. Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022.

Los pre-textos de La Florida del Inca. By El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega. Critical edition, with preliminary study and notes by José Miguel Martínez Torrejón, North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures (Chapel Hill: UNC Department of Romance Studies, 2021).

Violent First Contact in Venezuela. Nikolaus Federmann's Indian History. Latin American Originals Series 19. By Peter Hess. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021.

Certain characters and their roles in the European conquest of America are well known: Christopher Columbus, Hernando Cortés, Francisco Pizarro, Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, and a few others. Likewise, scholarly interest in the conquest has focused on the centers of great political, economic, and cultural entities such as the Aztec Empire in Mesoamerica and the Inca Empire in the Central Andes.

Other characters, events, and places have received less attention. This essay reviews a trend in recent specialized literature to expand understanding of the general process of the European conquest and colonization by studying specific cases

and “peripheral” areas. Research concerning remote places helps us to better understand the facilities and difficulties of the conquerors, the active resistance of aboriginal populations, the economic background of the conquering and colonizing enterprise, and the need to record the facts in historical accounts.

The first point deals with the attempt by Spanish conquerors in Central America to wrest control of the conquering enterprise of the Inca Empire that had already been undertaken by Francisco Pizarro and Diego de Almagro.¹ The claims of the conquistador Pedro de Alvarado show how fragile the situation of a group of conquistadors could be, even with the formal support of the Spanish crown through contracts or specific *capitulaciones*, as was the case with Francisco Pizarro. Alvarado’s claims also draw attention to the existence of serious disputes among the conquerors, with the claims of some imposing on the claims of others, including their former partners and companions.

This aspect is one to study in general, but it was especially important in the Andes, where the fight between supporters of Pizarro and supporters of Almagro had connotations beyond the factional disputes of the years 1536 to 1541. Even more illustrative were the claims of the conquerors (*encomenderos*) of Peru immediately after their internal quarrels, when they questioned the power that the crown acquired with the so-called New Laws of 1542 to restrict *encomenderos*’ privileges. Thus, the *encomenderos* began a new struggle to manage the rich and immense country they were conquering. The crown had to rely on the colonizers of a second migratory movement (who were not *encomenderos*) to crush the new rebellion (1548) and control the nascent colony. The crown eventually achieved supremacy in Peru thanks also to the alliance established with the *curacas* or caciques.

Another case is that of the indomitable Mapuche of Chile and their varied strategies to survive, negotiate, and avoid the enslavement to which they were being subjected.² In addition to the complexities of resistance, there are also little-known actors in the huge and long process of discoveries, conquest, and colonization throughout the Americas. Other cases are those of Castilla del Oro and Venezuela under the initiative of German bankers.³ The Welsers of Augsburg set out to conquer this territory in order to establish a colony based on the exploitation of mines and agricultural plantations. The project failed, perhaps because of its excessive dimensions. The case also shows the playing

1. W. George Lovell, *Death in the Snow: Pedro de Alvarado and the Illusive Conquest of Peru* (Montreal; Kingston: McGill, Queen’s University Press, 2022).

2. Eugene C. Berger, *This Incurable Evil: Mapuche Resistance to Spanish Enslavement, 1598–1687* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2023).

3. Giovanna Montenegro, *German Conquistadors in Venezuela: The Welsers’ Colony, Racialized Capitalism, and Cultural Memory* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2022).

out of disputes between different contingents of conquistadors when the Germans faced the Spanish in Cundinamarca (present-day Colombia).

The last case considered here deals with two texts that preceded *La Florida del Inca* by Inca Garcilaso de la Vega (1605). Recent research has shown that far from being preliminary versions, the two earlier texts were summaries made for specific purposes. The first was written by Garcilaso, who sought to present in his text reason to obtain the financing and patronage necessary to publish it. The second text had already been published, but there were doubts about its origin. Today, it is clear that it was elaborated by Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, the *cronista mayor* (official historian) of the Indies, to use in his own historical work.

The works here discussed are multidisciplinary contributions. In addition to historians, linguists and writers contribute to the analysis of unpublished or little-disseminated documents that allow us to better understand the facts and appreciate the authors' reasons for preparing them. José Miguel Martínez Torrejón has done an extraordinary job of establishing the origin of a recently published text that was previously considered to be an earlier version of *La Florida del Inca*.⁴ The editor deploys an impeccable philological analysis to demonstrate that we are dealing with a summary of an already existing text, one that highlights information that was later used in the text of Herrera y Tordesillas.

For his part, Peter Hess, a specialist in Germanic studies at the University of Texas at Austin, has translated and published in English the *Indianische Historia* (1557), an ambiguous account of the first expeditions of Nikolaus Federmann, the agent hired by the Welsers to conquer a territory for their South American colony.⁵ This edition allows for a more detailed and in-depth look at the first non-Iberian attempt to conquer northern South America, in 1530-31.

THE CONQUISTADOR WHO NEVER WAS

The history of Pedro de Alvarado is highly illustrative of the intrigues that grew out of conquistadors' ambitions but are rarely mentioned in the "official" history. W. George Lovell masterfully recreates an episode of the conquest that

4. El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *Los pre-textos de La Florida del Inca*, Edición crítica, estudio preliminar y notas de José Miguel Martínez Torrejón (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Studies in the Romance Languages and Literatures, University of North Carolina Department of Romance Studies, 2021).

5. Peter Hess, *Violent First Contact in Venezuela: Nikolaus Federmann's Indian History*. Latin American Originals Series 19 (University Park: Penn State University Press, 2021).

shows what occurred behind the scenes of non-epic actions. Pedro de Alvarado had already shown himself to be a bloodthirsty and ruthless conqueror in the capture of Mexico-Tenochtitlan (1519-21), to the point that his superiors and the crown sent him to Central America in an attempt to get rid of him. He was judged to be a danger to the imperial and personal projects of the conquerors by fanning the fire of the resistance in the indigenous population. In Guatemala, he continued his outrages, provoking resistance against the Spaniards among the Kaqchikel and other Central American native peoples.

Instead of being repressed by the crown, however, Alvarado was allowed to launch a project to seize the Pacific Ocean Basin. However, instead of directing his armada toward the distant archipelagos in the Ocean-Sea, Alvarado followed his own lead and headed for the Andean coasts. News had traveled with surprising speed throughout Europe and the Americas that the Spanish conquistadors were appropriating an immensely rich territory there, and ambitious conquerors were setting out in search of the country of incredible wealth (El Dorado) and the source of fragrant water and eternal youth (La Florida).

Alvarado attempted to meddle in the conquest of Peru, appropriating the “fabulous kingdom of Quito” that “belongs to no one,” according to his interpretation of the Capitulaciones of Toledo (July 26, 1529) and suggestions from his pilot, Juan Fernández.⁶ Lovell makes extensive use of the communication between the conquerors (Alvarado and Almagro) and the crown, with the crown appearing as a distant and impotent arbitrator that nonetheless ended up benefiting from the disputes among its vassals. Those who did feel the calamitous consequences of these disputes were the indigenous peoples, because the costs and consequences of the struggles among the conquerors weighed heavily on them.

Alvarado sought recognition and riches. His extreme, violent behavior created for him a reputation that prevented other conquerors from dealing with him. The conquerors of Peru confronted him to dissuade him from disputing with arms the “right” to conquer a country that in 1534 was just coming to be known. Temporarily putting aside their grudges against each other, Francisco Pizarro, Diego de Almagro, and Sebastián de Belalcázar negotiated with Alvarado for a very large amount of money, offering him, in effect, a ransom for a “kidnapping” that had not taken place.

6. Lovell, *Death in the Snow*, 35.

In the end, only a very small amount was paid by those who stayed behind to continue appropriating the wealth and labor of the Andean peoples. The payment of a “ransom” for not being attacked, when almost all of the 700 men that Alvarado had brought to the Andes had already gone over to the side of Almagro and Pizarro, tells us that Alvarado’s threat was very real. The possibility persisted that Alvarado could join Almagro, or Belalcázar, or both of them, against the Pizarro brothers, but it was also possible that he might enter into talks with Rumiñahui and other leaders connected to the murdered Inca Atahualpa who continued to control Quito and its surroundings.⁷ As Almagro explained to the king in a letter dated October 12, 1534, the ransom was the price of “having peace” with the fearsome Alvarado.⁸

In addition, the case shows that the conquerors were suspicious of one another. In fact, Belalcázar later tried to wrest the territory of the future New Granada from Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada, and Almagro and Pizarro created armies to face each other in a war that in less than a decade would end with their own murders.

ENSLAVED, BUT INDOMITABLE

From the beginning, the conquest of Chile presaged how complicated the relations of the Spanish with the local indigenous populations would be throughout the colonial period. In the central Andes, a majority of the indigenous population was organized to satisfy the demands of the Inca state in a territory rich in minerals and other resources. By contrast, Chile’s indigenous population was organized only into small self-contained towns, whose *lonko* (peacetime chief) had restricted authority, while the *toki* (wartime chief) seemed to have greater power. And, unlike the central Andes region, the southern territory offered very limited wealth from the perspective of the Spanish.

The varied responses of the local populations in Chile to the arrival of the Spaniards shows the different positions that the Mapuche caciques and their native populations came to have in regard to them and the possibility of the Spaniards settling in their lands. The control of the Spaniards over their populations, first through the *encomiendas* and later through enslavement, without distinguishing between friendly Indians and rebel Indians, led the Mapuche to resist their advance, sometimes violently and other times pacifically through parliaments (*parleys*).

In recent decades, studies such as those by Andrea Ruiz-Esquide, Guillaume Boccara, Jaime Valenzuela, and Eugene C. Berger (*This Incurable Evil*) have

7. Lovell, *Death in the Snow*, 69.

8. Lovell, *Death in the Snow*, 81.

sought to clarify the context in which relationships developed between the Spaniards and the indigenous populations in the Chilean territory.⁹ These efforts allow us to understand the process of the enslavement of the Mapuche, the individual responses of enslaved Indians, and the fundamental role that indigenous leaders played in the long process of resistance to the settlement of the Spaniards in the territory. They also contribute to our seeing the Mapuche as active participants in determining the conformation of colonial Chilean society.

In particular, these works allow us to understand the long Arauco War (1597–1687), which pitted the Spaniards against the Araucanía Indians—the Mapuche, Huiliche, Pehuenche, and Cunco, among others. The advance of the Spaniards over the Indian territories and the enslavement to which these groups were subjected met with strong resistance, which took various forms, though it was not always the most violent forms of resistance that prevailed or were chosen. The colonial response was the militarization of the border, but the Spanish also used this war to take prisoners in a “just war,” allowing the Indians identified as rebels to be taken prisoner and legally sold as slaves in the markets of Santiago, Lima, and other cities. The market for enslaved indigenous labor increased as the indigenous population of the *encomiendas* decreased. In fact, the Chilean *encomenderos* opted to hire soldiers to capture Mapuche as slaves in their service.¹⁰ In Lima, elite families commissioned governors posted to Chile to procure war-zone slaves to serve in their homes.¹¹

By 1640, it was clear that the Mapuche controlled the territory of Araucanía, so the parliaments became the way to negotiate both the taking of territories by the Spanish and the Mapuche demands. According to Berger, however, this form of resistance allowed the Spanish to gradually return to control the territory of Araucanía. This period of alliances finally ended when the governors decided to participate in the slave trade, considering that friendly Indians were not necessary for maintaining control of the territory. The parliaments continued, but only to mask the capture of the *tokis* and their people who came to try to establish alliances.

9. Andrea Ruiz-Esquide Figueroa, *Los indios amigos en la frontera Araucana* (Santiago de Chile: Editorial Universitaria, 1993); Guillaume Boccara, “Ethnogenesis Mapuche: resistencia y reconstrucción entre los indígenas del centro-sur de Chile (siglos XVI-XVIII),” *Hispanic American Historical Review* 79:3 (1999): 425–461; Jaime Valenzuela Márquez, “Indias esclavas ante la Real Audiencia de Chile (1650-1680): los caminos del amparo judicial para mujeres capturadas en la Guerra del Arauco,” in Valenzuela Márquez, *América en Diáspora: esclavitudes y migraciones forzadas en Chile y otras regiones americanas (siglos XVI-XIX)*, (Santiago de Chile: RIL Editores, 2017), 319–380.

10. Berger, *This Incurable Evil*, 50.

11. Teresa Vergara Ormeño, “Migración y trabajo femenino a principios del siglo XVII: el caso de las indias en Lima,” *Histórica* 12:1 (1997): 135–157.

UNCONQUERED TERRITORY

The case of the Welsers in what is present-day Venezuela is a particularly interesting chapter in the colonization of the Americas. The conquest had enrichment as one of its main motivations; common strategies were to obtain money by direct robbery or as a product of *encomendero* activities. The conquerors plundered the towns and continued to do so until, decades after the conquest, they established the bases of an economic system built on production—mining, manufacturing, agriculture, and livestock—as well as trade in manufactured goods. In the case of the Welsers, the conquerors were themselves merchants.

Giovanna Montenegro tells a complex history of the Welsers. On one hand, it is an economic history that refers to their activities in different parts of the Old World and the New. In America, the house had factors mainly in Santo Domingo and Venezuela. To begin, Montenegro reviews the controversy over the financing of the Habsburg empire by the Welsers and the Fuggers, the largest and most influential global merchant-banker corporations of the time. The Venezuelan adventure was a direct product of this.¹² The Welsers failed in their complex project of establishing a mining and plantation economy. They tried to make their experience of sugar production on the Atlantic islands of Madeira and La Palma de Canarias apply to the Caribbean islands. But instead of sugar, they engaged in gold mining and the trade in enslaved Africans and native peoples, in addition to the Atlantic trade of manufacturing goods. The enterprise came to sell more than a thousand enslaved indigenous people.

Montenegro in her text includes a valuable history of the enslavement of Native Americans, which includes labeling the Caribbean people as cannibals to justify capturing them and selling them as slaves.¹³ The history of the Welsers in America has been told elsewhere as well, through narratives, geographical maps, and family trees throughout centuries for private and national political purposes. As for narratives, the most important is the *Indianische Historia* (Indian History), despite its having been published only once (1557) before the nineteenth century. Peter Hess has translated the text into English, with a very valuable introduction. The text, by their agent Nikolaus Federmann, refers to the Welsers' first activities in America (1529-33) and reveals the attitudes assumed by Federmann toward the native peoples. In particular, his discussion of the exchange practices and reciprocal “gifts” is important because it suggests the origin of the difficulties he had with the local indigenous populations. This

12. Montenegro, *German Conquistadors in Venezuela*, 42–54.

13. Montenegro, *German Conquistadors in Venezuela*, 64–68.

theme is central to the narrative of the *Indianische Historia*: Federmann understood that he had to penetrate the viewpoints and motivations of the Indians so as to more easily control them in the name of European Christianity and racialized merchant capitalism.

In actuality, the text was published posthumously. Federmann wrote it to justify himself before the Welsers, who had accused him of disloyalty in business, and also to mollify the Spanish Inquisition, which saw him as a Lutheran. In part, the text is a “proof of merits” justifying his performance in America. Federmann died in a Santo Domingo jail in 1542, and there is no certainty that the entire *Indianische Historia* text is the one he wrote. In any case, the work does present an unambiguous description of the mechanisms that the Welsers deployed to found a permanent colony in America. The men of the Welser house resorted to extreme violence to enslave indigenous persons; in the text this is presented as part of the racial capitalism that invaders sought to establish in the New World as a means of civilizing native peoples, regardless of whether the conqueror was Spanish or German. Hess’s introduction is an excellent guide to understanding and appreciating the *Indianische Historia* as a private historical source of great importance that allows us to learn the secrets of a colonial project that had a very short duration (1529-46). Federmann’s text also underscores the participation of Spain in the German project. A good number of the administrators, supervisors, and even soldiers were Spaniards who were seeking the privileges and concessions granted by the crown to individuals.

In his second incursion of discovery and conquest, Federmann penetrated to the center of present-day Colombia, reaching Cundinamarca in search of the legendary El Dorado. He then used the incursion to claim the right to conquer the future New Granada. However, other Spanish suitors (Jiménez de Quesada and Sebastián de Belalcázar) made more powerful claims before the Consejo de Indias. After this first colonizing effort, what is present-day Venezuela remained “free” of colonizers, until a new colonizing campaign at the end of the seventeenth century.

PRELIMINARY DRAFT OR SUMMARY?

The contribution of José Miguel Martínez Torrejón is related to the preparation of historical sources for use by specialists. It is, in fact, a very laudable effort and of great importance for studying the history of Castilian literature. It shows how complicated it was for authors like Inca Garcilaso de la Vega to publish.

Martínez Torrejón analyzes two texts. One is unpublished, and its discoverer was Martínez Torrejón himself, in 2007 at the Hispanic Society of New York. The

other text had already been published, but in an edition with deficiencies and identified as a different text. Both are related to *La Florida del Inca* by Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, published in Lisbon in 1605. Martínez Torrejón calls them “pre-texts” because they precede the publication of *La Florida del Inca* that year. The first “pre-text” is the manuscript titled “Epitome of the discovery of the land of Florida and how the first discoverer and conqueror was Joan Ponce de León, a noble nobleman from the city of León. Year of 1515. And the discovery was in the year of 1513,” written in 1596-1601. Martínez Torrejón brings it to light for the first time, with his commentary. The second “pre-text” is *La Historia de los sucesos de la Florida del adelantado Hernando de Soto*, published by Miguel Maticorena in Lima in 2015.¹⁴ Both texts afford not only a better understanding of the vicissitudes of the publication of *La Florida*, but also its content. For this reason, the compilation provided by Martínez Torrejón is a very valuable tool for Garcilasian studies in general.

Upon finishing the long work of writing, the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega faced the issue of gathering financial funds and political support for the publication of a work of some 400 pages, an unofficial narrative of the conquest of Florida. He presented it for review by the Council of the Indies, even though he feared rejection and, furthermore, that his text would be used by another writer. The author’s fears were realized. The *cronista mayor* de las Indias, Antonio de Herrera y Tordesillas, prevented the publication of *La Florida del Inca* in Spain. Furthermore, having gotten the manuscript in his hands, Herrera y Tordesillas plagiarized it for Volumes 6 and 7 of his *Decades* (1615). Garcilaso had to publish the book in Lisbon with Pedro Craesbeeck in the year 1605.

The existence of *La Historia de los sucesos de la Florida* had been known since 1967 when Miguel Maticorena of the University of San Marcos in Lima published an article on the chronicler Herrera. However, Maticorena did not release the text then, explaining that the original was in a private collection in Seville. He considered it to be a preliminary version of the final work published in Lisbon. A year after Maticorena’s death in 2015, the enigmatic text was published by a Peruvian university from a photocopy obtained some 50 years earlier and, therefore, of very poor quality to serve as the basis for a reliable historical publication. The result was a very deficient transcription with gross errors and amendments that detracted from Maticorena’s effort to draw attention to what he considered a version prior to the one published or, at least, a source of information from Garcilaso.

14. El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *La Florida. Facsímil de un nuevo manuscrito*, Versión paleográfica y estudio de Miguel Maticorena (Lima: Fondo Editorial de la Universidad Ricardo Palma, 2015).

Explaining the production and purpose for such a text, Martínez Torrejón explains that an author would have had to make a summary version of such a long work, in order to show it to potential patrons.¹⁵ He also points out that the summary emphasized what was needed to get a book published, such as mentioning the actors in the story in a way that their relatives or compatriots could recognize them and, thanks to that, decide to support the edition. On the other hand, the *Epitome* should ignore the facts that compromised the protagonists by revealing them in prohibited activities (shamanism or cannibalism) or inappropriate acts (violent attitudes of the conquerors, or resistance of the native peoples, for example).

Thus, within the 500 years of the discoveries, conquests, and colonizations of parts of America, new scholarship brings us an interesting discussion of aspects of the conquest that have escaped the most common themes in Latin American and Latin Americanist historiography. These new trends allow us to further the knowledge and interpretations of facts that have seemed well known, and to open up new fields of study. In part, this opening is thanks to the collaborative work of historians and scholars from neighboring disciplines.

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15. El Inca Garcilaso de la Vega, *Los pre-textos de La Florida del Inca*, Martínez Torrejón, ed., 28–29.