

challenge much of the accepted knowledge about that region, which reminds the reader of the danger of generalizing about an area as large and diverse as Africa and a historical phenomenon as complex as the slave trade. Almost every chapter of the book is able to re-contextualize or challenge assumptions about slavery and the slave trade in the regions under study. Hawthorne makes his arguments by drawing from extensive manuscript sources in Africa and Brazil, the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database, and his personal knowledge of both regions.

The book is enhanced by the fact that the author has spent a significant amount of time in both regions. In fact, the second half of the book contains photographs taken by the author that illustrate the lifeways of contemporary Guinea-Bissau. Although there may be a danger in using such material for historical documentation, Hawthorne uses the evidence to good effect. In addition to the photos, the book makes good use of maps and historical images to support the thesis. Hawthorne successfully demonstrates the importance of case studies to understanding the diversity of the Atlantic World interactions. In doing so, he has offered another important contribution to the field.

*Albright College*  
*Reading, Pennsylvania*

ELIZABETH KIDDY

## CULTURAL & LITERARY STUDIES

*Into the Archive: Writing and Power in Colonial Peru.* By Kathryn Burns. Durham: Duke University Press, 2010. Pp. xv, 264. Notes. Glossary. Works consulted. Index.

In what promises to be a fruitful avenue for discerning the legal and political intricacies of colonial culture in Spanish America, Burns's *Into the Archive* offers historians an alternative way to look at empire-building in Spanish Peru. Through the lenses of crucial state practices, such as legal writing, the author historicizes and deconstructs the activities of colonial *escribanos* (notaries) and the archives they manufactured in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Cusco. In crafting a genealogy of the colonial archive, Burns not only challenges assumptions about centralized control of the state by the Habsburg monarchs but also covers transdisciplinary ground with discussions in cultural, literary, and postcolonial studies, as well as anthropology. Together, these redefine the nature and usefulness of archival documents as cultural texts and ethnographic records in their own right. They also highlight the role of writing in forging power, a practice central to the formation of the Spanish empire in America.

Burns begins her five-chapter journey discussing the role of notaries as producers of judicial truth by examining the institutional definitions and expectations of the job. She then proceeds to examine how *escribanos* built their careers, arguing that they enlisted a network of elite members to prop up their own personal businesses through a combination of legal and implicit or "customary" understandings of local practices. Subse-

quently, the author analyzes the realities of the daily work of *escribanos*, their apprenticeship, variant practices, and brokerage services. She also delineates the hierarchies and relationships of power within the *escribanos*' quarters of the lettered city, while acknowledging the plurality of hands that crafted the colonial judicial and extrajudicial records in Cusco, articulating a local "common sense." Burns's narrative also illuminates the often unpredictable ways in which clients' interests also shaped the content of legal documents. After fleshing out the building blocks of the colonial archive in Cusco, Burns finally discusses the validity and usefulness of archival documents for historical research. She emphasizes the need to read beyond the mere text of the documents themselves and into the wider texture of their historical conditions of production, a task that can only enrich and complicate historical narrative.

In foregrounding *escribanos*, their assistants, and their writing practices, Burns joins a growing community of Andeanists who have pointed to the expansive though unacknowledged scope of the colonial *ciudad letrada*, which included not only Spanish and creole *letrados* but also indigenous, mestizo, and Afro-Peruvian scholars, transatlantic travelers, petty church officials, native authorities, and, now, thanks to her book, colonial notaries and their assistants.

While Burns makes us aware of the acquired autonomy of notaries—along with the commoditization of *escribanías* and archives, the reader might question the rationale behind such autonomy in juxtaposition with the Habsburg empire's hegemonic approach to empire building. In what particular ways did these autonomous *escribanos* influence the course of law and colonialism as a whole, and, therefore, the hegemonic project of the empire as it extended the arm of justice to the two republics? Furthermore, what does this relative power of *escribanos* over the king's subjects tell us about institutionalized room for maneuvering and local interpretation of the law as constituent elements of a distinctive notion of Spanish colonial justice? And how did such notions influence, for example, the claims for justice of Indian authorities and ladino litigants before the king himself?

Such questions notwithstanding, Kathryn Burns's elegantly written and exquisitely illustrated *Into the Archive* constitutes a remarkable and innovative contribution to our understanding of the making of Spanish colonialism in colonial Cusco. It reminds historians that, among other expedients, the "fine print" of petty judicial officials constituted the very texture of the Spanish empire, and that positivist views of written documents as mere factual or hard evidence may be more problematic than modern historians commonly assume.

*The Ohio State University*  
*Columbus, Ohio*

ALCIRA DUEÑAS