Centering the margins: Capitalism and the Pacific World in mid-nineteenth century Arequipa

Maria Fernanda Boza Cuadros
Department of Anthropology, Syracuse University
mbozacua@syr.edu

Abstract

Trade policy and regulation were central to the emergent Peruvian state (ca. 1821-1879). The intersection of trade and geopolitical reconfigurations warranted the transition from “Spanish lake” to Pacific World in the nineteenth century. In this paper I examine the rise of the Pacific World from its margin of the Arequipa coast, emphasizing the effects of capitalism through the lens of maritime cultural landscapes. After independence (1821-1824), new ports were established; operation of certain coves sanctioned; and extractive activities shaped the region. The ports on the Arequipa coast supplied markets across the Andean south and Bolivia, and were a necessary and desired stop for North Atlantic ships sailing the Pacific. The Peruvian and Arequipa governments actively incorporated the coast into the inland urban markets of Cuzco, Moquegua, Puno, and the largest market, the city of Arequipa. Their efforts included the construction of roads and, way stations, and piers, thus providing infrastructural support to the regional trade and efforts against contraband. The economic networks that operated throughout here encompassed a vast portion of the population in different degrees of legitimacy. This region was strategic for the mercantile classes across the Andean south, the national government and foreign dignitaries in charge of the Peruvian trade. Contention among them arose from the regulation of trade, weighing on the power balance between the new Peruvian state, its citizens, and foreign powers. Data collected from archaeological and historical sources are combined to understand how these engagements and the pulses of capitalism impacted the Arequipa maritime cultural landscape from a multiscalar perspective. Close examination of globalizing processes reveals that the expansion of capitalism depended heavily on the transformations and continuities that the former had in small places and marginal areas, and that the imposition of a globalized market was accompanied by its involvement in local economies.

Key words: Spain, Peru, globalisation, capitalism
In this paper, I employ a maritime cultural landscape perspective to model the conditions that paved the way for the expansion of the Pacific World and its impact on post-Colonial Peru. Trade was key to states that emerged from former Spanish colonies on the eastern Pacific (1821-1879). Trade also became an articulation of neocolonial relations North Atlantic powers enforced over the emergent states. Britain was most prominent, but France, Italy, Belgium, the German states, and the United States also developed economic interests in the region (Blaufarb 2007; Condori 2014). Struggles that ensued along the western South American coast shaped the Pacific World, spurred by a new model of empire, one reliant on commercial dependence, free trade, and wage labor, and enforced with a mighty Pacific fleet (Blaufarb 2007, 761; Miller 1993). In Peru, the southern trade created a multiscalar margin on the coast of Arequipa: local, regional, national and global processes intersected to shape early Republican geopolitics. The dynamics of the Pacific world should be examined through a multi-scalar analysis of its margins to understand the ‘local contextualities’ (Giddens 1991, 22) that constituted it.

Natural conditions and the vast distance from the coast to the city of Arequipa hampered state efforts to penetrate the region, tilting the power balance away from the national government. Economically, Arequipa channeled most of the merchandise in and out of the Andean south, including commodities of great importance to North Atlantic powers: wool, quinine tree bark, and metals (Condori 2014). Furthermore, this region experienced the fastest economic recovery in the country following independence, and a thriving export economy since the mid 1820s, a phenomenon possible due to the efforts of the southern Andean elites. The ports of the south became loci of contention between different interest
groups, particularly foreign dignitaries and local authorities. By reconstructing the maritime cultural landscape of Arequipa, a multi-scalar perspective of global politics, the expansion of capitalism, and the growing pains of the Peruvian post-Colonial state is gained.

**Historical background**

The first decades after independence were riddled with internal strife caused by military strongmen known as *caudillos*. Caudillos engaged in open warfare from their regional bastions, relying on local support that was elusive to the central Peruvian government, and spread chaos across the country (Aljovín de Losada 2003; Gootenberg 1989; Jacobsen 1993; Larson 2004; Lynch 1992). Between the declaration of independence in 1821 and the early 1850s, the presence of a unified Peruvian state is debatable at best. Ramón Castilla, another military leader, consolidated the rule of Lima, pacified regional caudillos, engaged civil elites and institutions, and inaugurated a period of state building that lasted until the 1860s (Gootenberg 1989a; Lynch 1992). Slowly, liberal economic ideas gained broad acceptance among the ruling classes and guided aspects of the national economy to look outward and reject protectionist measures (Contreras Carranza 2011; Gootenberg 2013, 1989a; Larson 2004). The first export boom cycle of the national era, guano, began to unravel, and with it the rise of a plutocratic liberal state (Contreras Carranza 2011; Gootenberg 2013, 1989a; Cushman 2014).

The transition towards a national economy after independence emphasized regional ties. In Arequipa, this meant an expansion of the wool trade, which connected the city of Arequipa to its mountainous hinterland, Puno, and Cusco (Fig. 1); silver, copper, wine, and pisco were also produced and exported (Condori 2010, 2014; Gootenberg 1989; Brown 1986; Rice 2012). Arequipa elites, traditionally a landed and
mercantile aristocracy, supported liberal policies that put them at odds with the politically powerful protectionist merchant guild of Lima (Armas Asín 2011; Mazzeo de Vivó 2006; Gootenberg 1989). The guild repeatedly succeeded in imposing their agenda, creating one of the most protectionist economies in the region.

The early Republican period in Arequipa was marked by liberal ideologies championing individual liberties and free trade, and distancing Lima as the center of Peruvian power (Bonilla 1974; Condori 2010, 2014; Contreras and Glave Testino 2002; Gootenberg 1989). The south opposed protectionist measures closing all ports but Callao to international trade (Gootenberg 1999, 30). An increase in regional exports especially to British merchants encouraged a cautious support for liberal causes. Some supported a complete ban of imported (French) wines, (North American) coarse textiles, and other goods that competed with local products. British imports became common in other southern markets, like Cusco, where liberal causes slowly began to gain favor, and contributed to the expansion of the Arequipa sphere (Chambers 1999; Condori 2014; Gootenberg 1989). Generally, the south was more interested in seceding rather than taking over or moving the capital to Arequipa (Gootenberg 1989). Armed revolts sprouted across the region through this period.

**Arequipa’s maritime cultural landscape, 1821-1879**

The mercantile basis of the southern economy during the colonial period continued in the first decades after independence, promoting an early intersectional support for free trade reforms across the Andean south (Gootenberg 1999, 30) (Fig. 2). After independence, efforts for the revitalization of the southern economy arose from the Arequipa social and political elites. Improvements that “neared it [the city of Arequipa] to the coast”

1 figured prominently. Natural conditions along the Arequipa coast
make overland travel extremely difficult: deep ravines and narrow valleys crisscross large expanses of deserts (Figs. 1-2). Sea navigation also presented difficulties given the rough tides and unfavorable conditions along the coast, but was cheaper and faster than land traffic. Routes from the city to the sea took at least two or three days, and longer for caravans, making necessary the establishment of way stations. The inauguration of the Arequipa railroad in 1871 fulfilled the dreams of ocean proximity (Fig. 2). Roads and way stations were built by local governments or assigned Peruvians; New York-born capitalist Henry Meiggs built the railroad.

Small colonial ports remained in use after independence, and new ones were habilitated by the national government for local trade in coves along the coast (Monsalve 2011). All sites faced the hurdles of a desert location, mainly difficulties procuring water and foodstuffs, which were hauled from afar or imported. Earthquakes, tsunamis and tides caused damages to the ports regularly. Port captainships faced severe constraints for the exercise of their functions, as did offices across the country. Captains often decried the inability of their offices to conduct their functions due to the lack of boats, personnel, money and food for the personnel (numerous examples can be found across AHM Serie Capitanías). Further issues arose from the actions of foreign vice-consuls, particularly the British, who exercised their influence routinely, sanctioning blockades and military action against the local community and its authorities, and otherwise were involved in unstable national politics. Ships calling on Islay, Arica and Mollendo connected the Andean south to Liverpool, Bordeaux, Le Havre, Rio de Janeiro, Valparaíso, Cobija, Guayaquil and most Peruvian seaports. Arica and Islay were the first Peruvian ports visited by the British Pacific steamer line.
The rest of this section provides a brief overview of the coast from 1821-1879. This includes ports, coves habilitated for trade, and the formation of a series of networks for the exploitation of guano. The amount of commodities trafficked increased, the number of foreign officers at these ports grew, and foreign military presence became more common. Contemporaneously, habilitated coves served the southern economy for the fast transit of goods from valleys to ports and other coves, and were central to the southern guano economies.

**Quilca**

Quilca serviced the city of Arequipa as its main port at the time of independence (Fig. 2). Its location and conditions required ships calling to moor a mile south of the cove (Hidrográfica 1879). All loading and off-loading had to be done with boats across rough waters before entering the cove. The cove itself is guarded and with calm waters (Stiglich 1918), but the unpredictable exterior conditions of the sea made the anchorage unsafe, and ships were lost suddenly and quickly³. Quilca also serviced the city of Camaná. During this period, the customs house was located in the city of Arequipa, further complicating regional and local maritime trade in foreign goods. This arrangement delayed the arrival of merchandise to their destination markets, and provided ample opportunity for smuggling. The difficult conditions persuaded the government to move the location of the region’s primary port to the cove of Islay (1826), and the cove of Quilca was mostly abandoned after that⁴.

**Islay**

The trade through Quilca was re-channeled to cove of Islay in 1826 (Fig. 2). A pier, customs house and system to provide the settlement with water were promptly constructed. A priest was deployed here in 1827 to service
the port’s growing population. While Islay has better sea conditions than Quilca, transportation to the city demanded traversing the ample desert east of the port, and many deep and dry ravines that separate city and sea. New roads and way stations between the port and Arequipa were built several times in the mid-nineteenth century.

Islay’s population reached the thousands by the 1830s. The port channeled most of the Arequipa trade, as well as imports and exports to and from Cuzco and Puno. Foreign trading houses and dignitaries established in Arequipa also established branches in Islay starting the 1820s. The port town, located three hundred feet above the sea on a rocky promenade, was protected against seaquakes that regularly hit the region. Furthermore, the cove was already economically important for the region, as it has served as the locus of guano extraction and distribution for communities in the Arequipa and Cuzco hinterlands (Figs. 1-2). Guano extraction took place in the Alvizuri and La Fuente islands, and dealings were moved to nearby Matarani after the establishment of the port.

Completion of the Arequipa railroad signaled the end for Islay. Mollendo was given the role of main port in 1871. The customs house, naval offices, and consulates moved soon thereafter, and it was ordered that those who remained there moved to Mollendo that same year.

**Mollendo**

Mollendo became the main port of Arequipa in 1871, with the railroad connecting the port with Arequipa, Puno and Cuzco. Its natural capacity for receiving small boats only required early infrastructural efforts at the port (García y García, 45) (Fig. 1). A breakwater connected the shore with Ponce Island. A new system of running water was inaugurated in 1873, which required transporting water from the vicinity of the city of Arequipa,
on what was lauded as a “the greatest work of its kind in the world”. A light was raised on the promontory by the beach in the evenings to facilitate nocturnal operations and navigation.

The move from Islay was facilitated by its proximity (12 km). Buildings had been erected in wood on the bedrock of Islay, and were disassembled and later reassembled in Mollendo. Some of these buildings, including the customs house that was transported from Islay to Mollendo, remain in place, and Mollendo is still the seat of a Navy office.

**Arica**

Arica was the most important southern port at the end of the colonial period (Fig. 1). A pier and customhouse were built in 1827. Upon the establishment of the department of Moquegua in 1857, Arica was separated from Arequipa. Its importance for the southern trade continued. Water was easily accessible from wells and the nearby Azapa valley, where foodstuffs were procured. Arica was connected to the nearby city of Tacna by railroad, inaugurated in 1856. Navigation was comparatively easy, although tides often brought labors to a halt between June and August (García y García 1863).
Fig. 1: Peru, according to Mariano Paz Soldan’s 1867 map. Satellite imagery acquired through OpenLayers plugin for QGIS.

Arica channeled a significant amount of the imports destined to markets across Cuzco, Puno and Bolivia. A Bolivian port was established at Cobija in 1825, but it failed to challenge the importance of Arica to the Bolivian trade. The difficulty, time and cost of overland transportation from Arica to upland Bolivian cities were significantly lower than from Cobija.\(^7\) (Fig. 1).

**Iquique**

A port was established in Iquique in 1827 to support mineral extraction from the nearby mines\(^8\) (Figs. 1-2). Establishing the port proved to be difficult. No fresh water, underground or otherwise, can be found in Iquique. Fresh water was eventually made available through processing seawater in condensation machines. Supply of the port depended exclusively on imported foodstuffs. Extractive activities in the vicinity of the port provided the basis for its growth, and population had reached 5000 by the 1860s (García y García). Iquique also channeled the guano trade from the Guaneras del Sur, a series of islands and cliffs in the far south where guano was extracted. The discovery and exploitation of
saltpeter accelerated the growth of the port and the establishment of more settlements and infrastructure (particularly railroads). Saltpeter, as important for its fertilizing properties as guano, was the main export of the port by the 1860s. Iquique became the capital of the Department of Tarapaca when the latter was separated from Moquegua in 1878.

**Chala**

A port captainship was established in Chala in 1850 (Figs. 1-2). Its purpose was to channel products from nearby provinces of Arequipa, and those from neighboring Cuzco and Ayacucho. Conditions at sea prevented this objective from being fully realized. Constant roughness of the sea and unrelenting damages and losses of infrastructure hindered operations⁹. Much of the regional trade continued to be channeled through Islay and Mollendo.

**Habilitated coves**

The rough shores of Arequipa are littered with small coves. These coastal nooks represented important nodes in economic networks that spread throughout the south, and were strategic for military operations during the tumultuous first years of the Republic. Some of the coves were habilitated for trade in local and national commodities, and as a way to speed transportation of agricultural products from different points along the littoral (Fig. 2). Given the difficult natural conditions for overland travel along coastal Arequipa, the use of these coves ameliorated transportation times and costs.
Local populations at many of these coves were likely descendants of the ethnic group known in colonial documents as *camanchacas*. These coastal fishermen are poorly recorded in the ethnohistorical record and unknown archaeologically. What is known is that they were the only group indigenous to the coves and beaches from Arequipa throughout the Atacama Desert; their numbers in colonial grants were the lowest in the region; and that they went out to sea in boats made of sea lion skins. Documentary records show that this kind of boat continued in use along the coast from Chala to Iquique until the beginning of the twentieth century (Stiglich 1918). Interestingly, records from Camaná show that fishermen from Sechura serviced the valley\(^\text{10}\). These northerners used wooden rafts (*balsas de palo*), which continue to be used by fishermen in the Tambo valley today (Valdivia Ochoa 2017, personal communication). The spread
and continuity of this northern tradition along the Arequipa coast remains to be elucidated.

Highland groups from across Arequipa, Cuzco and Puno were also present at the coast; their engagements with camanchaca groups remain unclear. These highland groups descended onto the coast to put their herds to pasture in *lomas* (seasonal forests), collect seaweed, and extract guano from the islands for use in cultivation elsewhere. These practices predate the imposition of the Spanish colonial system, and guano remained an important commodity throughout the Andean south during the period under study\(^1\). These dynamics created complexes of extraction, collection and distribution of guano. Fertilizer extracted from coastal Arequipa was moved inland across the south, and regional extraction was complemented with imports from Chincha that were brought to Islay and Quilca\(^2\). Guano complexes were located in Islay, Cocotea, Lomas and Arantas (Fig. 2).

**Cocotea**

The Cocotea complex is located 30 km southeast of the Tambo valley. The cove was first habilitated for the traffic of guano inland in 1828\(^3\); it appears in mid-nineteenth century trade laws as a third-tier port or “habilitated cove”. Although closer to Islay, it depended on certain functions from Arica offices (Paz Soldan 1877). The beach at Pacay is very narrow and littered with rocks, conditions that favored Cocotea for use in port operations. Cocotea also presents a better anchorage. Sea traffic scared away the birds in the area, and in 1851 extraction was restricted to the months of November and April in order to allow birds to nest undisturbed (Ortiz 1852).
Archaeological remains and documentary evidence provide insight into the establishment and use of a guano-centered complex at Cocotea (Fig. 3). The population of the complex was small, only a few hundred semi-permanently there, who depended on the nearby Tambo valley for provisioning. Limited water could be found in Cocotea. Extraction was done at the islands of Jesús, La Mansa and Margarita. Once extracted, guano was stored in platforms near the beach at Pacay; platforms near the shore of Cocotea likely served a similar function. The extant architectural features across the complex consist of buildings of roughly cut fieldstones laid without mortar, sometimes constructed on artificial terraces. At present, function for these buildings has been attributed to housing operatives and herds in the Cocotea ravine, as well as the storage of guano and other goods in both Cocotea and Pacay. Surface artifacts in Cocotea include imported manufacture, local low-fired earthenwares, and animal and shell remains. All dateable artifacts are consistent with a mid-19th century occupation. Surface materials were scarce in Pacay.
Discussion and conclusion

Given the central role of trade commodity in the nineteenth century global economy and the traditional reliance of the Andean southern economy on trade, the coast takes a preeminent role. No regional or international trade could take place without maritime ports. The geopolitical reconfigurations of the nineteenth century across the Pacific basin arose in good measure as a result of the capitalist orientation of North Atlantic powers. Islay and Arica were required stops along the way for steamers and sailboats regularly crossing the Atlantic to the Pacific to Asia, and back. Entanglements between involved interest groups impacted local conditions, national policies and international relations.

As the Pacific world spread and established itself across the Peruvian Pacific, private foreign investors provided certain maritime services,
particularly the transport of passengers, mail and cargo. In contrast, local
governments and Peruvian citizens provided the construction and
maintenance of roads and way stations, respectively. During their visits,
foreign ships would also deliver luxury and staple imports, and take with
them products indispensable for the reification of the mid-nineteenth
century world order, including: wool destined to British looms, quinine tree
bark for pharmaceutical products that aided in the expansion of European
powers into malaria-ridden areas, and silver and copper to stimulate the
world economy. Operations were secured by force, with British and
French warships closely navigating the South American shores. Southern
ports were not unique for being blockaded; these took place in Callao, the
Chincha islands, and other northern ports. In many cases, the reason for
these blockades directly involved trade and traders. These military actions
disregarded international law and intervened in local conflicts, particularly
during revolutions, uprisings and other political conflicts that arose in Peru
between 1821 and 1879. A glaring exception to visitors on the Arequipa
cost were North American whaling boats: while their presence is noted
in port records from Callao and the northern port of Paita, they are
conspicuously absent from Islay, Mollendo, Arica and Iquique records.

The operation of southern ports raised other international questions as
well. The case of Arica highlights both the mutual integration of Bolivia
and the Peruvian south, and the issues that arose from the regulation of
trade with the neighboring country. The inauguration of the Bolivian port
at Cobija in 1825 does not seem to have affected the flow of goods
destined for Bolivia through Arica. International conflicts and several
treatises emerged from this situation. The Bolivian trade through Arica,
and Tacna en route to Bolivia, encouraged the construction of the Arica-
Tacna railroad in addition to the establishment of small customhouses and checkpoints between the port and the border.

Small-scale conditions in the southern coast heavily affected the processes of state formation undergone by the emergent Republic of Peru. Struggles between the Lima and Arequipa mercantile elites cannot be explained without considering their entanglements with foreign traders based in Peru. Lima’s merchant guild was directly responsible for overthrowing regimes during the first years of the Republic with the stated purpose of blocking liberal economic policies. Early liberal trends across the south, particularly at the city of Arequipa, encouraged social unrest in the region and promoted improvement projects in the southern ports. Indeed, a force just as mighty as Lima’s merchant guild were the citizens of the city of Arequipa whom, in allegiance with groups in Moquegua and Tacna, defended democratic values and its economic sequitur, liberalism, through newspaper editorials, public demonstrations, and armed action. Peace, the deciding factor for the definitive establishment of the state in the Peruvian Republic, was only possible after the defeat and death of most caudillos. Preliminary analysis of port records suggests a sustained growth of international trade through these ports at times of peace. Inherently tied to the peace process was the trend towards a liberal, globally oriented national trade economy that ultimately consolidated the Peruvian state, an endeavor that escaped nationalist military leaders before the 1850s (Gootenberg 1989).

The spread of influence of Arequipa City, particularly in regards to economic dogma, grew consistently during the mid-nineteenth century, and gave rise to the Andean south (Flores Galindo 1977). The political separation of Moquegua did not affect the formation of this regional bastion. The geographical and economic distance of the Guaneras del
Sur from Arequipa, the interest of the national government in the exploitation of guano and saltpeter in the region, and the later loss of the southernmost strip of Peru (including Arica and Iquique) to Chile in the Ancon Treaty of 1883, definitively shaped the south in Arequipa-centric terms.

Two interconnected trends can be recognized from the changes in the Arequipa maritime cultural landscape. First, the establishment of ports and habitation of coves for trade in increasing numbers throughout the period of 1821-1879. These “new” ports built on long-standing economic traditions connected the Pacific to places as far as eastern Cuzco and the Titicaca basin. Second, the construction of roads, way stations and railroads that facilitated trade and sought to bring the city of Arequipa closer to the coast. These efforts fall in line with the early outward look of the southern economy and its entanglements, particularly with British traders. Unsurprisingly, investments in infrastructure across Arequipa and the south at large originated from regional governments more often than from Lima. These improvements were the logical answer to the needs of the emerging southern trade at the beginning of the Republic. The founding of Islay, given the inadequacy of the port at Quilca and its later move to Mollendo, the final point of the railroad, highlights this. While Arequipa began to rise early in the Republic as the center of the Andean south, it only did so by facilitating trade across the region through its ports. The traditional and intersectional reliance on trade across the south created the conditions for the economic recovery of the region after the wars of independence, and for part of the political instability in the country at the beginning of the Republic.

Importantly, trends in the Arequipa region differed from others in the country during the guano boom years. The use of guano was widespread
across southern agricultural areas from coast to uplands, and consumption of the dung extracted from coastal Arequipa remained in Arequipa. Some guano from Chincha was also being taken to Islay and Quilca. Whether this was due to reduced guano availability because of damage to the birds’ nesting grounds, excessive sea traffic and human presence or because extraction was constrained otherwise remains to be elucidated. At the same time, guano extracted from the islands of Chincha, Guañape and the Guaneras del Sur was being exported in formidable amounts (Figs. 1-2).

The lens of maritime cultural landscapes provides a unique perspective of the multiple forces that impacted the Arequipa coast in the mid-nineteenth century. These were affected by broad scale processes, such as the expansion of free trade capitalism across the Pacific basin, the rise of post-Colonial Latin American states, and the formation of a regional bastion in the Andean south.

**Endnotes**

1 El Registro Municipal Num 18 p. 1, 24 Set 1859. Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, Hemeroteca (Microfilms)


3 El Republicano Num 45 p. 196, 30 Set 1826. Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, Hemeroteca (Microfilms)

4 Archivo Histórico de Marina, Serie Capitanía Islay 1842, f. 7 En las caletas de Quilca y Cocotea no tienen habitantes

5 Gutiérrez de la Fuenta, Antonio, Comunicación del Ex-Prefecto a la Junta Departamental, in: *El Republicano* Tomo 4 N. 32 p. 4, 8 ago 1829. Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, Hemeroteca (Microfilms)
References


García y García, Aurelio. 1863. *Derrotero de la costa del Peru*. Peru


Ortiz, José Manuel. 1852. *Colección de Leyes, Decretos y Órdenes Publicados en el Perú desde su Independencia*. Huaraz: Imprenta de la Colección.


Biography

Maria Fernanda Boza Cuadros is a PhD candidate in the Department of Anthropology at Syracuse University, where she specializes in historical archaeology. Her dissertation research focuses on the impact that processes of formation of the Peruvian state and the expansion of capitalism had on the Arequipa coast. She has conducted archaeological and bioarchaeological research across Peru and the United States. Maria Fernanda is also an affiliate researcher at the Peruvian Center for Maritime and Underwater Archaeology (CPAMS).