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Allies at Odds: The Andean Church and Its Indigenous Agents, 1583–1671. John Charles. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2010. 283 pp. \$27.95. ISBN 978-0-8263-4831-9.

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John Charles explores the consequences of indigenous literacy by concentrating on the relationship between *indios ladinos* (native intermediaries familiar with Spanish language and customs) and parish priests in the archbishopric of Lima between the years 1583 and 1671. He demonstrates that bicultural Indians played an important role in both everyday parish life and in the construction of Andean Christianities. By tracing the development of a lettered Andean society in the midcolonial period, Charles illustrates how *indios ladinos* used colonial law to negotiate Spanish rule at the local level. His central thesis in *Allies at Odds* is that “while theoretically literacy was essential for bringing Andean peoples into the Christian fold, its practice in the hands of native subjects thwarted the Church’s efforts to evangelize on its own terms” (9). Native church assistants, Charles convincingly argues, were crucial actors in the “spiritual conquest” of Peru and hence are deserving of more scholarly attention than they have traditionally received.

Allies at Odds is organized into six chapters, the first of which provides a review of the origins and spread of native literacy in the Andes. Charles seeks to move beyond the cliché that only a handful of exceptional Indians, most notably Felipe Guaman Poma de Ayala, were able to read and write. By analyzing catechisms, native wills, and Indian-authored texts from civil and ecclesiastical courts, he discovered that “direct and indirect evidence of lettered Andeans abounds” (30). In the second chapter Charles shifts his focus to Spanish efforts to promote the Quechua of Cuzco as the lingua franca in the linguistically plural context of the Andes. Although colonial authorities sought to teach Indians Spanish, they were quickly forced to tolerate indigenous languages for the purposes of evangelization. But

given that many priests were incompetent in Quechua, *indios ladinos* filed legal complaints against them because they were unable to properly teach Christian doctrine. The larger “language question,” according to Charles, was in the end a way for native litigants to apply “their training in law and literacy to insert themselves in church affairs” (69).

The third chapter concentrates on the intersection between *quipus* (knotted cords) and alphabetic writing. Charles contends that the adaptation of literacy in Andean communities did not trigger an immediate erasure of traditional forms of record keeping. He shows, using archival materials, how “native intermediaries drew on various media traditions when negotiating between the colonizers and indigenous people” (71). Colonial officials and missionaries saw *quipus* as useful accounting aids, pedagogical tools for catechism, and as mnemonic devices for prayers and confession. But *indios ladinos* also used their cords to record Spanish transgressions and to preserve the memory of Andean traditions. In chapter 4 Charles turns his attention to the relationship between literacy and clerical violence. Native intermediaries were “economic middlemen” who were charged with maintaining church records that were used to keep track of tribute collection. Even though “native church officials imposed the unwelcomed demands of the colonizers” (115), Charles explains that they also used written documents to defend their communities and expose the shortcomings of their parish priests.

In chapter 5 Charles examines the role indigenous officials played in the campaigns to extirpate “idolatry,” arguing that “the effort to contain traditional Andean religiosity owed as much to the indigenous forces within native parishes as to the European forces without” (133). Rejecting the idea that Indians and Spaniards were perpetually at odds with one another, he interestingly points out that ecclesiastical lawsuits were not always written by priests. Some *indios ladinos* acted as notaries in idolatry trials while others were prosecutors who directed judicial investigations and recommended punishments. The final chapter serves as a conclusion to *Allies at Odds* and looks at the ways in which native intermediaries adapted Spanish legal forms to defend their rights. Charles states that “native litigants succeeded in creating social havoc and legal stalemates” and “placed limits on the types of missionary practices they would abide” (192). In the end, *indios ladinos* both worked together with and opposed the clergy, accepting the legitimacy of colonial law that was a “source of their rights and also their oppression” (194).

Allies at Odds includes a useful map of the archbishopric of Lima along with several other important figures of legal documents, colonial churches, Guaman Poma’s drawings, and a photograph of a *quipu*. Throughout the book Charles rightly refuses to analyze *indios ladinos* within the confinement of traditional binary opposites, most particularly those of the colonizer-colonized, the extirpator-idolater, and the Spanish-Indian republics. The picture he paints of Spanish colonialism is far more complex, one in which Spaniards and Indians interact in both complementary and conflicting ways. Unwilling to define colonial texts based upon the ethnicity of their authors, Charles points to fascinating “discursive alliances” and as a result studies all members of colonial societies together in one larger conceptual framework. *Allies at Odds* will be a very useful study for both scholars and graduate students seeking to understand the intermediary world of *indios ladinos*.