

Sounds of Power: An Ethnoorganological Approach to Understanding Colonial Music Culture in the Peruvian Andes

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Abstract : In colonial Peru, the Spanish crown relied on religious orders, most notably Dominicans, Franciscans, and Jesuits, for accelerating processes of colonization. The dissemination of Christian art, architecture, and music, and most of all, the agency of indigenous people in their production played a key role in facilitating the acceptance of the new religious and political system. Current research on Peruvian colonial music culture and its role as a vehicle for colonization focus on practices in urban centers. The lack of (written) primary sources seems to turn rural areas into a less attractive research territory for musicologists. This paper advocates for a more inclusive approach. By investigating seventeenth-century pipe organs as material remains of Franciscan missionary music culture, it shows how reactions to colonial forces and Christianization in rural Andean locations could follow tendencies different from those in urban areas. Indigenous musicians in cities tried to 'fit' into the European system in order to be accepted by the ruling Spanish elite. By contrast, the indigenous-built pipe organs in the rural Peruvian Colca-Valley show distinctly native-Andean influences. This paper argues that this syncretism can be interpreted as hybridity in Homi K. Bhabha's sense, as a means of the colonized to undermine the power of the colonizer and to advance reactionary politics. Not only will it show the necessity of considering rural Peruvian music history in modern scholarship for arriving at a more complete picture of colonial culture, but it will also evidence the advantages of a mixed-methodology approach. Historical organology, combined with concepts from ethnomusicology and post-colonial studies, proves as a useful tool in the absence or scarcity of written primary sources.

Keywords : cultural hybridity, music as reactionary politics, Latin American pipe organs, Peruvian colonial music

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