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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Dependent Labour in Colonial Spanish America: *Indios Yanaconas* and *Indios Laborío*s

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Abstract

In Spanish America, the enslavement of Africans was just one of several widespread forms of bonded labour. This article explains the different forms of colonial obligations that limited the freedom of the Indigenous population. It compares the situation in the viceroyalties of New Spain (Mexico) and Peru, with a special focus on two types of dependent labourer: the *laborío*s in New Spain and the *yanaconas* in Peru. Although the origin of both categorizations was different, they were functionally comparable. Both generally worked in mines, haciendas, cattle farms, and in textile or sugar mills. It has been argued that by migrating to their workplace, they cut ties with their communities of origin – a hypothesis that was often, but not always, true. This article shows that both categorizations could be temporary as well as permanent and hereditary. On occasion, people could change to other, "neighbouring" categorizations, such as "sedentary" Indigenous people living in Indigenous communities or free mulattos – the latter being more frequent in New Spain. To explain these phenomena and highlight the agency of the colonial population, we examine petitions as a strategy to change fiscal categorization in order to gain greater freedom. Examples from Cajamarca in northern Peru and Michoacán in western Mexico are presented; both regions lay outside the traditional mining centres in relation to which bonded labour has been most often analysed in the respective viceroyalties. We argue that developments towards the end of the colonial period differed between the regions.

Introduction

Global labour historians have long pointed out that a broad variety of forms of unfree labour existed beyond slavery. Furthermore, wage payment did not necessarily imply completely free labour relations.[1] Lucassen and Heerma van Voss, among others, have studied the interplay between migration and unfree labour, especially in

[1]Alessandro Stanziani, "The Legal Status of Labour from the Seventeenth to the Nineteenth Century: Russia in a Comparative European Perspective", *International Review of Social History*, 54:3 (2009), pp. 359–389; Marcel van der Linden, *Workers of the World: Essays Toward a Global Labor History*

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colonial contexts.[2] This article follows the tradition of this line of research by exploring the entanglements of migration and unfree labour in colonial Spanish America. Furthermore, it adds another factor to the complex interplay of labour and migration: fiscal categorization. Fiscal and labour categorizations tended to be closely associated, especially for the Indigenous population. More specifically, I compare two fiscal categorizations, the first being *yanaconas*, from the Viceroyalty of Peru, and the second being *laboríos*, from the Viceroyalty of New Spain. More specifically, I compare Cajamarca in northern Peru with Michoacán in western New Spain. So far, neither area has received much analysis with respect to labour relations in the colonial period. In the case of *yanaconas* and *laboríos*, labour and fiscal categorizations tended to coalesce, though in the former this was primarily in relation to the subtype *yanacona de españoles*.

Both economies studied here were characterized by Spanish enterprises producing textiles, and, in the case of Michoacán, also sugar. There was some influence of mining, but not to a degree comparable to the core mining areas of Peru in Charcas around Potosí, which was famous for forced labour in the form of the mining *mita*, or in the northern parts of New Spain, where *repartimiento* labour coexisted with free wage labour and African slavery. Livestock also played a role, but to a greater degree in Cajamarca. Both regions, moreover, were located on trading routes important for their respective viceroyalties, and there were parallels in their demographic structure.

As Raquel Gil Montero and I have shown elsewhere, in a comparison between the north of the Audiencia of Lima and Charcas, bonded labour and the attached fiscal categorizations varied not only between Spanish viceroyalties, but also within them.[3] But while the category *yanacona* existed in almost all *audiencias* (administrative districts) of the Viceroyalty of Peru, it did not in the Viceroyalty of New Spain. Nor did the New Spanish category *laborío* appear in Peru. This terminological divergence points to the influence of the organization of tribute, labour, and migration in the pre-Hispanic empires well beyond the Spanish conquest. In principle, the comparison of any region in both viceroyalties that lay within the territory of pre-Hispanic empires could serve a similar purpose, but the more similarity with respect to the regional economy and demography the better. Other Andean provinces in the Audiencia of Lima and Quito in the Viceroyalty of Peru and the provinces surrounding Mexico City, such as the regions of Puebla and Oaxaca, would likely be roughly comparable. The decision to study Cajamarca and Michoacán also reflected my knowledge of and previous work on these regions. It is this comparison that constitutes the prime contribution of this article, since it points to broader strategies for organizing labour in the Spanish Empire and shows how, post-conquest, the Spaniards adapted the organization they encountered on the spot and entangled it with colonial fiscal categorizations. This arrangement was

(Leiden, 2008), pp. 10–32; Jan Lucassen, "The History of Work and Labour", *Tijdschrift voor Sociale en Economische Geschiedenis / The Low Countries Journal of Social and Economic History*, 11:2 (2014), pp. 65–83.

[2]Leo Lucassen and Lex Heerma van Voss, "Flight as Fight", in Marcus Rediker, Titas Chakraborty, and Matthias van Rossum (eds), *A Global History of Runaways: Workers, Mobility, and Capitalism 1600–1850* (Oakland, CA, 2019), pp. 1–21.

[3]Raquel Gil Montero and Sarah Albiez-Wieck, "Putting Tribute into Perspective: Negotiating Colonial Obligations in Seventeenth-Century Peru", *Dhau. Jahrbuch für außereuropäische Geschichte*, 3 (2020), pp. 57–85.

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additionally influenced by migration. Legal petitions constitute a good example of how the fiscal and labour categorizations were negotiated locally by the actors, thereby shaping Spanish colonial labour regimes. This is why I chose them as a key source for this analysis. Generally, the workers aimed to achieve greater freedom through the petitions, and, in the case of Michoacán, also to distance themselves from their African ancestry.

In the present article, I argue that *yanaconas* and *laborío*s were functionally comparable despite their different origin. People categorized as *yanaconas* and *laborío*s were not generally part of an Indigenous community/town, nor did they have access to communally owned land. They often, but not always, migrated to their workplace. Both groups can be categorized as dependent labourers, and their tribute – the amount of which was less than that of those Indigenous people belonging to a community – was often paid by their masters. One difference was that, in Michoacán, there was a clearer closeness between *laborío*s and free Afrodescendants than in Cajamarca, likely due to differences in demography and demographic structure – there were simply far fewer workers of African descent in Cajamarca. Towards the end of the colonial period, in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, there were indications that the degree of dependency among Peruvian *yanaconas* had increased. Seemingly, some of them became subject to a special form of dependent labour: debt peonage.[4] At the same time, as Riley showed decades ago, *laborío*s gained greater independence from their masters.[5]

Methodologically, the article shows the negotiation of fiscal and labour categorizations as expressed in petitions to colonial authorities. It thereby adds to a long line of research that has shown how colonial categorizations were, to a certain extent, flexible, though few authors have explicitly and broadly addressed the aspect of fiscality.[6] I will

[4]For a similar development, though slightly earlier in time, see Ann M. Wightman, *Indigenous Migration and Social Change: The Forasteros of Cuzco, 1570–1720* (Durham, NC, 1990), pp. 83–84.

[5]James D. Riley, "Crown Law and Rural Labor in New Spain: The Status of Gañanes during the Eighteenth Century", *The Hispanic American Historical Review*, 64:2 (1984), pp. 259-285, 278–280.

[6]One of the most widely quoted authors is R. Douglas Cope, *The Limits of Racial Domination: Plebeian Society in Colonial Mexico City, 1660–1720* (Madison, WI, 1994). Similar work has been done by Joanne Rappaport, *The Disappearing Mestizo: Configuring Difference in the Colonial New Kingdom of Granada* (Durham, NC, 2014), and Carlos D. Ciriza-Mendivil, "'Por decir ser yndia'. Las difusas fronteras del mestizaje en la ciudad de Quito (siglo XVII)", *Colonial Latin American Review*, 26:4 (2017), pp. 509–527. Other studies more strongly emphasizing fiscality include Chantal Caillavet and Martin Minchom, "Le Métis imaginaire. Idéaux classificatoires et stratégies socio-raciales en Amérique latine (XVIe–XXe siècle)", *L´Homme*, 32:122/124 (1992), pp. 115–132; Aude Argouse, "'Soi tal mestizo abido y tenido por tal desde que nasi'. Peticiones indígenas de cambio de fuero, Cajamarca, Perú, 1642–1674", *Colonial Latin American Historical Review*, 16:4 (2007), pp. 401–427; Norma A. Castillo Palma, "Informaciones y probanzas de limpieza de sangre. Teoría y realidad frente a la movilidad de la población novohispana producida por el mestizaje", in Nikolaus Böttcher, Bernd Hausberger, and Max-Sebastián Hering Torres (eds), *El peso de la sangre. Limpios, mestizos y nobles en el mundo hispánico* (Mexico City, 2011), pp. 210–250; Norah L.A. Gharala, *Taxing Blackness: Free Afromexican Tribute in Bourbon New Spain* (Tuscaloosa, AL, 2019); Cynthia E. Milton and Ben Vinson III, "Counting Heads: Race and Non-Native Tribute Policy in Colonial Spanish America", *Journal of Colonialism and Colonial History*, 3:3 (2002). A previous publication by the present author should also be mentioned: Sarah Albiez-Wieck and Raquel Gil Montero, "The Emergence of Colonial Fiscal Categorizations in Peru: Forasteros and Yanaconas del Rey, Sixteenth to Nineteenth Centuries", *Journal of Iberian and Latin*

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ask how *yanaconas* and *laborío*s tried to negotiate their degree of dependency through fiscal petitions that often explicitly addressed questions of unfree labour.

There were two important dividing lines in fiscal and labour matters: the first separated those who had to pay tribute from those who were exempted and who received payment. In general, it was the non-noble Indigenous population as well as some of the free Afrodescendant[7] population who were categorized as tribute payers. The second dividing line separated those who had to render forced labour from those who did not, or who were even beneficiaries of forced labour. Broadly speaking, those subject to dependent, and generally temporary, labour were Indigenous, with some of the Indigenous nobility being exempted. Free people of African descent[8] were not usually subject to these periodic labour services. There were exceptions, mostly relating to those who had part-African, part-Indigenous ancestry. These two dividing lines were often, but not always, congruent. It is on the latter that this article will focus, setting aside African and Indigenous slavery in the narrow, legal sense of the word.[9]

But even if most of the Indigenous population were not legally enslaved, their freedom was severely restricted, especially if they lived in rural towns and within Spanish enterprises. Refusal to comply with labour demands often led to coercion, being chained to their workplace or even sent to prison.[10] The non-payment of tribute could also lead to imprisonment, a punishment that could also befall the Indigenous nobility responsible for collecting and handing in the payments.[11]

It was difficult, but not impossible, to change one's fiscal categorization and therefore alter the degree of freedom one enjoyed. The two main ways to do so were through

American Studies, 26:1 (2020), pp. 1–24. See, too, Gil Montero and Albiez-Wieck, "Putting Tribute into Perspective".

[7]By law, from the late sixteenth century onwards, all free people of African descent in Spanish America had to pay tribute. However, for most of the colonial period, this obligation was not enforced in many regions. It was mainly in the Viceroyalty of New Spain and especially in the second half of the colonial period that free mulattos and Blacks were forced to pay tribute. See Sarah Albiez-Wieck, "Ascendencia 'mixta' y categoría fiscal. Estrategias de peticionarios cajamarquinos y michoacanos, siglos XVII–XIX", in Sarah Albiez-Wieck, Lina M. Cruz Lira, and Antonio Fuentes Barragán (eds), *El que no tiene de inga, tiene de mandinga. Honor y mestizaje en los mundos americanos* (Madrid and Frankfurt am Main, 2020) pp. 111–162; Gharala, *Taxing Blackness*.

[8]There was a complex terminology denominating free Afrodescendants, but the two most common designations were "mulattos" and "free Blacks".

[9]African slavery in Spanish America has been closely studied for many decades. One example is Vicent Sanz Rozalén, Michael Zeuske, and Santiago de Luxán (eds), *Resistencia, delito y dominación en el mundo esclavo. Microhistorias de la esclavitud atlántica (siglos XVII–XIX)* (Granada, 2019). Indigenous slavery has received much less attention. An excellent recent study is Andrés Reséndez, *La Otra Esclavitud* (Mexico City, 2019).

[10]Linda A. Newson, "The Demographic Impact of Colonization", in Victor Bulmer-Thomas, John H. Coatsworth, and Roberto Cortés Conde (eds), *The Cambridge Economic History of Latin America: Vol. 1: The Colonial Era and the Short Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 2005), pp. 143-184, 172.

[11]An example of nobles from Michoacán being imprisoned can be found in Archivo Histórico de la Ciudad de Pátzcuaro, Pátzcuaro, Mexico [hereafter, AHCP], "El gobernador e principales de el pueblo de Turicato sobre intentos de división de su cabecera y pago de tributos", 4 June 1572–12 February 1574, Caja 3, Exp. 17 (Ficha 218). Another example, from Cajamarca, of a common tribute payer can be found in Archivo Regional de Cajamarca, Cajamarca, Peru [hereafter, ARC], "Juan Casimiro de la Cruz pago de tributos por ser mestizos", 5 August 1760–25 October 1760, Corregimiento, Causas Ordinarias, Tributos, Leg. 05, Exp. 16b.

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migration and by petitioning the local or regional authorities – often pursued in combination. In both cases, exemption from labour services tied to specific categorizations was a shared goal of the subjects of the Spanish Crown, especially Indigenous people.[12] However, too much mobility could also lead to a loss of freedom: those regarded as vagabonds were often imprisoned and later exiled.[13] The Spaniards wanted the Indigenous population to live permanently in rural towns or to live or work in private Spanish businesses, where they could be controlled and exploited.

In the following, I will first give a general introduction to Indigenous dependent labour in Spanish America and explain how that labour impacted the specific social, economic, and demographic structure in Cajamarca and Michoacán. I then describe the fiscal categorizations attached to Indigenous dependent labour and migration in these two regions. Finally, I will show how the degree of freedom was negotiated through petitions, often in combination with migration. In relation to petitions, I focus on the end of the colonial period, having earlier traced the development of such petitions since the late sixteenth century.

Indigenous Forced Labour in Spanish America

It is essential to understand that even if not all Indigenous people and Afrodescendants were subject to tribute payments or different forms of forced labour (or both), the mere fact that they were categorized into these broad groups meant they were potentially subject to these obligations and that their current exempt status could be changed at will by the colonizers.[14] Spaniards, on the contrary, could only be subject to dependent labour if they had committed a crime. Being categorized as a vagabond was considered a potential crime.

In the first century after the Spanish conquest of America, Indigenous labour services were dominated by the *encomienda*, an institution whereby the Castilian Crown allocated Indigenous tribute payments and manpower to Spanish settlers. There was much overlap with the labour service (*repartimiento*) that had been introduced in the Caribbean immediately after the arrival of Columbus. Following pre-Hispanic practices, the labour required to be provided to the Spaniards – first, in perpetuity and, later, for two lifetimes – was referred to by the Taino word *naboría*.[15] In 1542, however, under the New Laws, *Leyes Nuevas*, the *encomienda* was limited to tribute payments by the Indigenous people allocated in *encomienda* to someone. The New Laws were further concerned with the spatial and legal separation of the "two republics", and also

[12] For a detailed argument, see Sarah Albiez-Wieck, *Taxing Difference in Peru and New Spain (16th–19th Century): Negotiating Social Differences and Belonging* (Leiden and Boston, MA, 2022).

[13] An example from Michoacán is AHCP, Diego Mexía, "sastre, sobre tener oficio y no ser vagabundo", 1619, Caja 8, carpeta 6.

[14] An example of these potential changes was the increasing restriction, at least theoretically, of exemptions for the indigenous nobility, limiting them from 1572 to *caciques* and their firstborn sons: "De los tributos, y tassas de los Indios. Libro 6, Título V", in *Recopilación de leyes de los reynos de las Indias* (Madrid, 1680). Available at: http://www.leyes.congreso.gob.pe/Documentos/LeyIndia/0206005.pdf, Law 18a; last accessed 13 October 2014.

[15] John M. Monteiro, "Labor Systems", in Bulmer-Thomas *et al., The Cambridge Economic History of Latin America*, I, pp. 185–234, 191.

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abolished the *naborías* in their existing form.[16] Despite the early official abolition, in Peru as well as in New Spain some *encomiendas* endured until the nineteenth century, albeit in a reduced number and limited to payments, not work.[17]

In Peru, the *repartimientos* continued until at least 1662, with labourers assigned to textile mills, called *obrajes*, and other places.[18] In this viceroyalty, the *mita* was of particular relevance, alongside the *repartimiento* and *encomienda*. The *mita* had pre-Hispanic precursors. However, Viceroy Toledo, who held office between 1569 and 1581, institutionalized it in its Spanish colonial form.[19] Afterwards, a certain percentage of the Indigenous population aged between eighteen and fifty years of age had to perform periodic labour services.[20] *Mita* services in agriculture differed from those in mining; they also differed among cities, and from region to region. The infamous mining *mita* in the silver mines of Potosí was only performed by the population of the surrounding regions, totalling sixteen provinces.[21] In most other regions of the Viceroyalty Peru, there was no mining *mita*, but there were other forms of labour service that were directed to guarding herds, construction work, agricultural tasks in haciendas, and working in lodges and textile mills. This *mita* was generally called *mita de plaza*. The beneficiaries of this kind of *mita* were not only Spanish entrepreneurs and

[16]Carlos S. Paredes Martínez, "Minería en transición. Repercusiones sociales por la extracción de minerales en Michoacán y su entorno en el temprano siglo XVI", in Sarah Albiez-Wieck and Hans Roskamp (eds), *Nuevas contribuciones al estudio del antiguo Michoacán* (Zamora, 2016), pp. 173–201.

[17]For Peru: José de la Puente Brunke, *Encomienda y encomenderos en el Perú. Estudio social y político de una institución colonial* (Seville, 1992). The last *encomienda* in New Spain was transformed into a national pension after Independence and lasted until 1934. It belonged to the heirs of the last Mexican emperor Moctezuma. However, this was a very particular exception. See Martha Terán, "Extinción de los tributos de la Nueva España, 1810–1822. Tomo II", in *idem, Tributos tardíos de la Nueva España. Programa interactivo* (Mexico City, 2016); version 22.0.0.153. Available at: https://mediateca.inah.gob.mx/repositorio/islandora/object/libro%3A813; last accessed 1 September 2025.

[18]Manuel Miño Grijalva, *El obraje. Fábricas primitivas en el mundo hispanoamericano en los albores del capitalismo, 1530–1850* (Mexico City, 2016), p. 201. Miño Grijalva points out that, in Peru, the workers in the *obrajes* seldom worked in periodic shifts and that there was no relay of workers. In the sixteenth century, it was not uncommon for workers to be sold with the *obraje*. Therefore, in practice, the *repartimiento* could be tantamount to slavery, despite slavery having been prohibited. The *obraje* owners paid the tribute for their workers.

[19]Wightman, *Indigenous Migration and Social Change*, p. 15. The duration of the *mita* obligation varied significantly across the regions of the Viceroyalty of Peru. Toledo also revised the *yanacona* categorization.

[20]In large parts of the Viceroyalty of Peru, including Cajamarca, this was one seventh of the population. However, in the Audiencia de Quito, it was one fifth: Udo Oberem, "Contribución a la historia del trabajador rural en América Latina. 'Conciertos' y 'Huasipungeros' en Ecuador", in Segundo E. Moreno Yánez and Udo Oberem (eds), *Contribución a La Etnohistoria Ecuatoriana* (Otavalo, 1981), pp. 299–342, 307; Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz, "Mita, migraciones y pueblos. Variaciones en el espacio y en el tiempo. Alto Perú, 1573–1692", *Historia Boliviana*, 3:1 (1986), pp. 31–59, 31; Aude Argouse, "Transcription d'un document inédit. Répartition de mita en 1666. Rationalisation de l'économie et main d'œuvre indienne dans le Corregimiento de Cajamarca", *Bulletin de l'Institut Français d'Etudes Andines*, 33:1 (2004), pp. 97–134.

[21]Paul Charney, "Negotiating Roots: Indian Migrants in the Lima Valley During the Colonial Period", *Colonial Latin American Historical Review*, 5:1 (1996), pp. 1–20; Raquel Gil Montero, "Migración y tributación en los Andes. Chichas y Lípez a fines del siglo XVII", *Anuario de Estudios Americanos*, 70:1 (2013), pp. 39–65; Aude Argouse, *"Je le dis pour mémoire". Testaments d'indiens: Lieux d'une justice ordinaire. Cajamarca, Pérou, XVIIe siècle* (Paris, 2016), pp. 14–15.

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church-based institutions, but also Indigenous nobles and enterprises, such as textile mills owned by Indigenous communities.[22]

The *mita* did not exist in New Spain. The *repartimiento* was officially abolished there in 1632, although this prohibition was not immediately implemented. In the northern mining areas, including Michoacán, the *repartimiento* persisted until the eighteenth century. It usually comprised four per cent of the population and took place every six months – a much lower percentage than for the *mita* in Peru.[23] Not surprisingly, the impact of periodic labour services was much greater in Peru than in New Spain.

In addition to these labour services, *caciques* and *encomenderos* both in Peru and New Spain demanded additional services – mostly personal services, *servicios personales* – from their subordinate Indigenous communities. The Catholic Church also benefited from these services, in the form of construction work on church buildings or chores/cooking for the local priest, often performed by women and with varying degrees of voluntariness. Furthermore, the church received contributions in money or kind that were linked more closely to the tribute obligation in its proper sense. Those included the costs of maintaining local priests and were sometimes even collected together with the royal tribute.[24] The official abolition of personal services in 1549 was not actually implemented[25] and had to be restated by the Cortes de Cádiz as late as 1812. The 1812 Constitution abolished all labour services, including the *mita*.[26]

Despite all these different forms of dependent labour, which at least partially limited the freedom of movement of workers, Indigenous peoples, as free vassals of the Crown, in principle enjoyed freedom of movement, as shown by Zavala in his masterly study.[27]

[22]This can clearly be observed in a seventeenth-century allocation of *mitayos* in Cajamarca. Argouse, "Transcription d'un document inédit". See also José Dammert Bellido, *Cajamarca en el siglo XVI* (Lima, 1997), pp. 156–160.

[23]Monteiro, "Labor Systems", pp. 190–201; María C. Gavira Márquez, "'Entiendan que desobedecen'. Estrategias de resistencia de la población indígena michoacana ante la coacción para el trabajo en las minas", in Carlos R. Ruiz Medrano (ed.), *Los otros rebeldes novohispanos. Imaginarios, discursos y cultura política de la subversión y la resistencia* (San Luis Potosí, 2015), pp. 64–98, 79, 85.

[24]Martha Terán, "Geografía de los partidos tributarios de la Nueva España. Los subdelegados como recaudadores de los tributos, 1805–1810", in Rafael Diego-Fernández Sotelo, María P. Gutiérrez Lorenzo, and Luis Alberto Arrioja Díaz Viruell (eds), *De reinos y subdelegaciones. Nuevos escenarios para un nuevo orden en la América borbónica* (Lima, 2014), p. 80.

[25]Charney, "Negotiating Roots", p. 4; Manuel Miño Grijalva, "Trabajo concentrado vs. trabajo doméstico. Para una historiografía sobre el trabajo en los obrajes andinos y novohispanos", in Sonia Pérez Toledo and Sergio Solano de las Aguas (eds), *Pensar la historia del trabajo y los trabajadores en América, siglos XVIII y XIX* (Madrid, 2016), pp. 204–206.

[26]Isabel M. Povea Moreno, "La mita minera a debate en el contexto de las Cortes de Cádiz (1810–1814). Entre viejos esquemas y nuevas concepciones", *Naveg@mérica. Revista electrónica de la Asociación Española de Americanistas*, 5 (2010). Available at: https://revistas.um.es/navegamerica/article/view/111381/105731; last accessed 13 September 2019. Scarlett O'Phelan Godoy, *Mestizos reales en el virreinato del Perú. Indios nobles, caciques y capitanes de mita* (Lima, 2013), p. 276.

[27]Silvio Zavala, "La libertad de movimiento de los indios de Nueva España", in Elías Trabulse (ed.), *Estudios acerca de la historia del trabajo en México. Homenaje del Centro de Estudios Históricos a Silvio Zavala* (Mexico City, 1988), pp. 213–252.

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Labour Systems and Migration in Cajamarca and Michoacán

Exploring the set of fiscal categorizations and their entanglements with forced labour and migration in the northern Peruvian region of Cajamarca, and in the western Mexican region of Michoacán, demonstrates that the type of forced labour employed depended partly on the regional economic and demographic structure. In this respect, Cajamarca and Michoacán were similar enough to justify comparison, and the existing dissimilarities also explain differences in the forms of labour. Furthermore, they have not previously been studied much with respect to that topic. Both were part of pre-Hispanic empires (Inca and Tarascan respectively). In the Spanish colonial period, both were secondary colonial centres transversed by important routes to frontier regions. They shared haciendas, estancias, textile mills (*obrajes*), and mines as key economic enterprises that employed Indigenous (and Afrodescendant) labourers, but with varying significance. Michoacán additionally had sugar mills (*ingenios*).

Cajamarca's economy was marked by cattle herding in *estancias*, agriculture on haciendas, and some textile mills. Several small mines had existed since pre-Hispanic times, but there was only one major one, Huelgayoc, which achieved significance from the second half of the eighteenth century.[28] Interestingly, in contrast to the far better known mines of Potosí and Huancavelica, this mine was not operated by *mita* workers but rather by employed free or semi-free labourers called *quinteros*.[29] The labour force working on the haciendas and in textile mills mostly comprised Indigenous people serving temporarily under the *mita* system as *mitayos*.[30] Some of these *mitayos* also moved across geographical and political provincial borders, with *mitayos* from Cajamarca serving in Trujillo. In addition, *yanaconas de españoles* worked in Spanish enterprises. Some of the workers were "freely" contracted, and had diverse fiscal categorizations, such as *forasteros*. These *forasteros* were migrants or descendants of migrants (see below). There were also African or Afrodescendant slaves, but in smaller numbers.[31]

[28] Danitza L. Márquez Ramírez, "El entorno material y la vida cotidiana a través del mobiliario doméstico en la ciudad de Cajamarca durante el periodo colonial tardío y los inicios del periodo republicano (1750–1850)" (BA thesis, Escuela Académico Profesional de Historia, Universidad Nacional de Trujillo, 2015), pp. 17, 66–68. The *visita* of 1540 by Cristóbal de Barrientos mentions the working of silver mines seemingly since pre-Hispanic times: Cristóbal de Barrientos, "Visita de las Siete Guarangas de la Provincia de Caxamarca. Chiquelete, 24 de agosto de 1540", in "El primer informe etnológico sobre Cajamarca. Año de 1540", ed. Waldemar Espinoza Soriano, *Revista Peruana de Cultura*, Special Issue, 11–12 (1967), pp. 27–37, 39.

[29] Carlos Contreras, *Los mineros y el rey. Los Andes del norte: Hualgayoc, 1770–1825* (Lima, 1995), pp. 88–89.

[30] Pereyra Plasencia mentions the existence of African slaves attached to an *obraje* in San Juan de Churín, Cajatambo. Hugo Pereyra Plasencia, "Mita obrajera, idolatría y rebelión en San Juan de Churín (1663)", *Boletín del Instituto Riva-Agüero*, 13 (1984), pp. 209–244, 220, but I have been unable to locate similar references to Cajamarca.

[31] Juan Castañeda Murga, "Indígenas entre españoles. Trujillo del Perú 1534–1619", *Nueva Corónica*, 1 (2013), pp. 1–15; Argouse, "Transcription d'un document inédit"; Flaminio Álvarez Rodríguez, "Poblaciones Marginales en Cajamarca Colonial. Los africanos en Cajamarca, 1600–1855", in Margarita Salazar and Jessica Bendezú (eds), *Pueblos, provincias y regiones en la historia del Perú* (Lima, 2007). For the intense historical nexus between Cajamarca and Trujillo, see Karoline Noack, "Caciques, Escribanos y las Construcciones de

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The colonial economy of Michoacán was similar to that of Cajamarca inasmuch as it comprised a mix of agriculture, cattle-farming, manufacturing, and mining. Furthermore, commerce played an important role in connecting Michoacán to the Pacific coast, Mexico City, and the mining areas to the north.[32] Unlike in Cajamarca, mining activities, especially copper mining, were the continuation of a long pre-Hispanic tradition.[33] However, copper mining never became as important as the silver mines of Zacatecas and Guanajuato more to the north.[34] With regard to the haciendas, it should be pointed out that, during the colonial period, many haciendas became important population centres, taking over some of the functions initially provided only by the Indigenous communities (*pueblos de indios*). For some migrants, on occasion, this also generated a sense of belonging and a form of de facto access to land,[35] which, in turn, made them less dependent. Sometimes, textile mills were associated with the haciendas, but these *obrajes* also existed in urban areas.[36] In all of these enterprises, the workforce comprised both free Afrodescendant and Indigenous people, the latter generally categorized as *laborío*s, who often migrated, but not always over long distances.

Especially in the early colonial period, both Peruvian and New Spanish workers could be sold together with the textile mill, and their work could de facto amount to slavery, despite an abundance of legislation outlawing these abuses.[37] This de facto slavery was felt and suffered by the workers, and emerges more or less directly in many sources. Some historians have even argued that they were sometimes treated even worse than slaves, in the sense that they were not bought and did not represent an economic investment but a labour force usable without any direct cost. At the same time, however, Spanish administrators worked to preserve the Indigenous communities so that they could continue to provide labour.[38]

Historias. Cajamarca, Perú, siglo XVI", in David Cahill and Blanca Tovías (eds), *Élites Indígenas en los Andes. Nobles, caciques y cabildantes bajo el yugo colonial* (Quito, 2003), pp. 213–228.

[32]Chantal Cramaussel, "Relaciones entre la Nueva Vizcaya y la Provincia de Michoacán", *Relaciones. Estudios de Historia y Sociedad*, 25:100 (2004), pp. 173–203, 176; *idem* (ed.), *Rutas de la Nueva España* (Zamora, 2006); Cecilia Noriega, "Claude Morin, Michoacán en la Nueva España del siglo XVIII. Crecimiento y desigualdad de una economía colonial", *Estudios de Historia Novohispana*, 8:8 (1985), pp. 337–342, 339; Claude Morin, *Michoacán en la Nueva España del siglo XVIII. Crecimiento y desigualdad en una economía colonial* (Mexico City, 1979); Claudia Espejel Carbajal, *Caminos de Michoacán … y pueblos que voy pasando* (Mexico City, 1992).

[33]Sarah Albiez-Wieck, *Contactos exteriores del Estado tarasco. Influencias desde dentro y fuera de Mesoamérica* (Zamora, 2013).

[34]Gavira Márquez, "'Entiendan que desobedecen'"; Enrique Tandeter, "The Mining Industry", in Bulmer-Thomas *et al., The Cambridge Economic History of Latin America*, I, p. 335.

[35]Bernardo García Martínez, "Los poblados de hacienda. Personajes olvidados en la historia del México rural", in Alicia Hernández Chávez and Manuel Miño Grijalva (eds), *Cincuenta años de historia en México, Vol. 1* (Mexico City, 1991), pp. 331–370.

[36]Manuel Miño Grijalva, "El entorno rural y el complejo hacienda-obraje en la Nueva España", in Hernández Chávez and Miño Grijalva, *Cincuenta años de historia en México*, pp. 371–388, 371–374.

[37]Miño Grijalva, *El obraje*, pp. 194–198. See also Silvio Arturo Zavala, *El servicio personal de los indios en el Perú. Extractos del siglo XVII* (Mexico City, 1979).

[38]Luis M. Glave, "Condición social, categorías fiscales y trabajo de los indios a mediados del siglo XVII. Un debate sobre la reducción general del reino en 1660". Available at https://www.academia.edu/39251764/Condición_social_categorías_fiscales_y_trabajo_de_los_indios_a_mediados_del_siglo_XVII_un_debate_sobre_la_reducción_general_del_reino_en_1660; last accessed 28 May 2019; Julio Sarmiento Gutiérrez

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The respective provincial capitals were Cajamarca, which de jure was an Indigenous town (*pueblo de indios*), and Valladolid (today Morelia), which had been the regional capital since 1580 and had a city charter. The exact size of their respective jurisdictions varied over time, with the creation of the *Intendencias* in the 1780s being the most significant change. With that, the *corregimiento* and the homonymous province of Cajamarca became part of the larger *Intendencia* of Trujillo (Figures 1 and 2) and the province Michoacán part of the larger *Intendencia* of Valladolid (Figures 3 and 4). We only have comparable demographic data for the core regions (the provinces).[39] Uncertain estimates for Cajamarca at the time of the Spanish conquest suggest a population of around 60,000.[40] Undoubtedly, the province of Michoacán was more densely populated, with a realistic estimate of its population being around 250,000 at the same time.[41] The demographic collapse after the Spanish conquest was intense in both regions, but seems to have been more drastic in Michoacán. By the mid-seventeenth century, both regions had only a few thousand tributaries left – the tributaries as head of households often being the only ones on whom we have data. In 1651, the province of Cajamarca had 2,381 and the province of Michoacán 4,406 in 1657. As in many other regions of Spanish America, the demographic collapse led to more intense pressure on the local Indigenous population with respect to tribute exaction and labour service. This pressure led many Indigenous people to flee to other territories.[42] As migrants, they generally had to pay a lower tribute – this was true for both the *laboríos* in Michoacán and the *yanaconas* and *forasteros* in Cajamarca; furthermore, the Cajamarcan categorizations were exempt from the *mita*.

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and Tristán Ravines Sánchez, *Cajamarca. Historia y Cultura* (Cajamarca, [1991] 2009), p. 105; Karen Spalding, "Exploitation as an Economic System: The State and the Extraction of Surplus in Colonial Peru", in George A. Collier, Renato I. Rosaldo, and John D. Wirth (eds), *The Inca and the Aztec States, 1400–1800: Anthropology and History* (New York, 1982), p. 338.

[39]For a detailed analysis, see Albiez-Wieck, *Taxing Difference in Peru and New Spain*, ch. 1, which notes that the province or *Partido* of Cajamarca roughly comprised seven social units, termed *guarangas*, and the province of Michoacán roughly paralleled what was later called the *alcaldía mayor de* Valladolid. See also Archivo General de Indias, Seville, Spain [hereafter, AGI], Mapa de la provincia de Michoacán, 1745, MP-Mexico, 152.

[40]Daniel G. Julien, "Late Pre-Inkaic Ethnic Groups in Highland Peru: An Archaeological-Ethnohistorical Model of the Political Geography of the Cajamarca Region", *Latin American Antiquity*, 4:3 (1993), pp. 246–273, 267. This number seems extremely high compared to the fewer than 3,000 tributaries of the seven *guarangas* of mid-sixteenth-century Cajamarca. However, most likely the area referred to as pre-Hispanic Cajamarca was much larger (but not well-defined, unlike the seven *guarangas*) and we compare tributaries to total population. Since I am not a specialist on pre-Hispanic Cajamarcan archaeology, I cannot judge whether Julien's estimate is plausible. If it is, the demographic decline in Cajamarca would have been noteworthy too.

[41]Beltrán estimates a figure of 248,648 inhabitants for the *sierra*, without further specifying the extent of that region; it might have roughly approximated the province of Michoacán. See Ulises Beltrán, "Estado y sociedad tarascos en la época prehispánica", in Brigitte de Boehm Lameiras and Ulises Beltrán (eds), *El Michoacán Antiguo. Estado y Sociedad Tarascos en la Época Prehispánica* (Michoacán, 1994), pp. 28–168, 119.

[42]As Pereyra Plasencia has shown in "Mita obrajera, idolatría y rebelión", pp. 214–229, in the case of the *obraje* in San Juan de Churín, the pressure could even trigger violent resistance by Indigenous workers. In that case, it was combined with Spanish encroachment of indigenous land, something that also happened in

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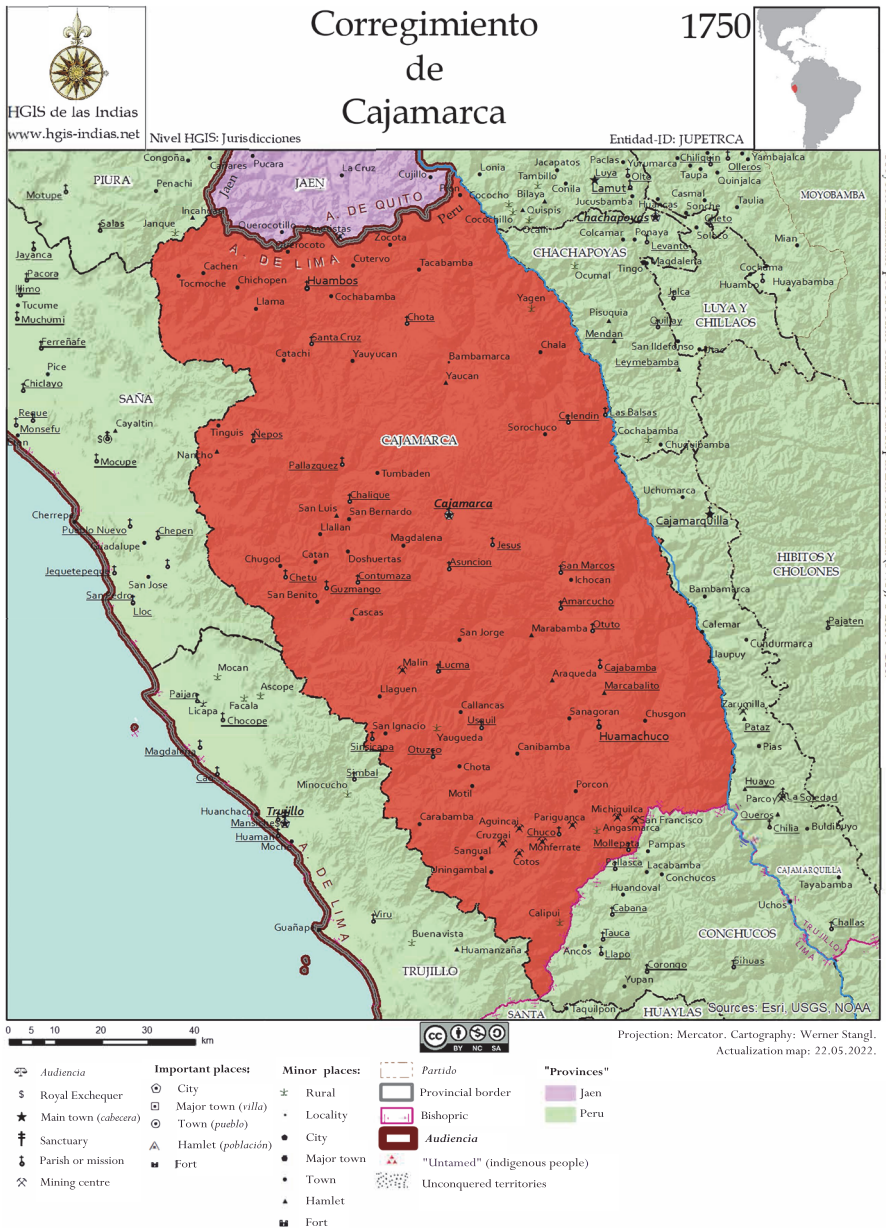


Figure 1. The *corregimiento* Cajamarca with its provinces Huambos, Cajamarca, and Huamachuco.
Source: Stangl, Werner. "Digital Resources: HGIS de las Indias", Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Latin American History. 30 April 2020; 10.1093/acrefore/9780199366439.013.822. Accessed 29 September 2025. With permission.

Cajamarca. Furthermore, there was a messianic element to the revolt, with the local *cacique* contributing to the exploitation of the Indigenous worker and rumours circulating about their possible enslavement.

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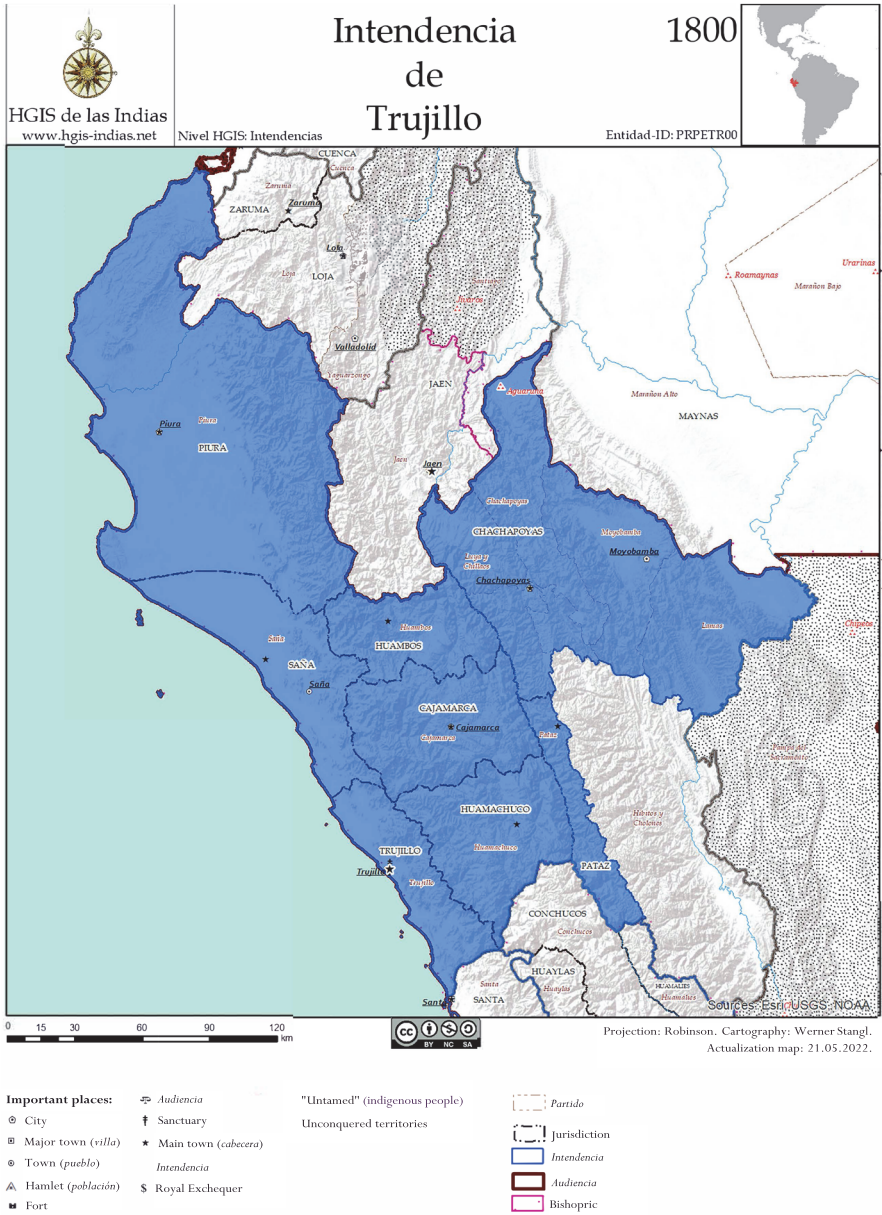


Figure 2. The Intendencia of Trujillo.
Source: Stangl, "Digital Resources: HGIS de las Indias". With permission.

Although the population started to recover in the second half of the seventeenth century, that recovery became significant only in the second half of the eighteenth century. In 1789, there were 5,712 tributaries in Cajamarca and 12,863 in the

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Figure 3. The Spanish province of Michoacán.
Source: Stangl, "Digital Resources: HGIS de las Indias". With permission.

subdelegación Valladolid. In the 1790s, Cajamarca's Indigenous population had more or less recovered to its pre-conquest size, but it was not until Independence, and really only towards the end of the nineteenth century, that Michoacán's population had fully

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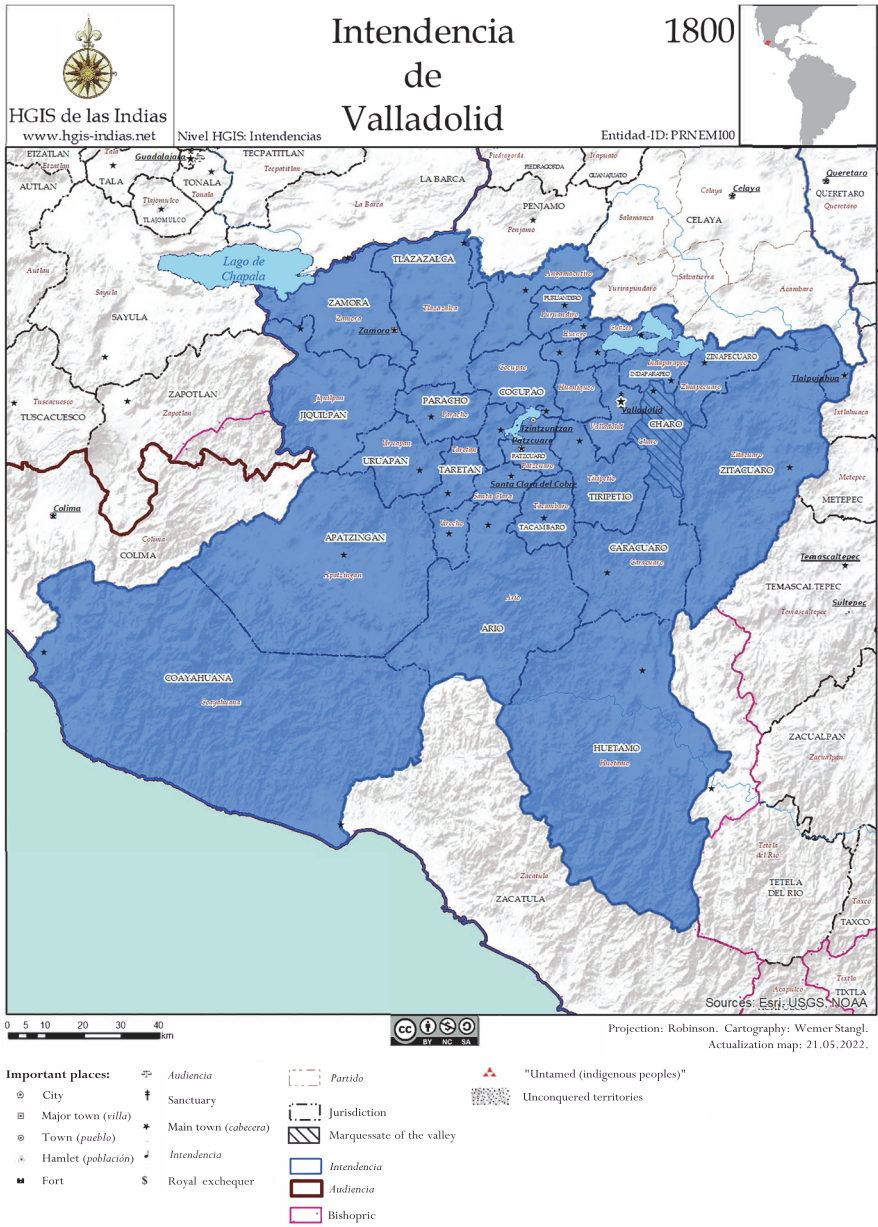


Figure 4. The Intendencia of Valladolid.
Source: Stangl, "Digital Resources: HGIS de las Indias". With permission.

recovered.[43] In 1827, the newly founded federal state of Michoacán, which comprised around 80 per cent of the territory of the pre-Hispanic Tarascan State, had

[43]In 1895, the state of Michoacán had 933,372 inhabitants, i.e. around twenty per cent more than the 741,105 calculated for 1524, although the state was around twenty per cent larger than the modern state.

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406,953 inhabitants.[44] This suggests that population size remained much more stable in Cajamarca than in Michoacán, a hypothesis already adduced for Cajamarca by Cook and Pereyra Plasencia based on data for specific parts or periods only.[45] On the percentage of migrant Indigenous peoples as well as people of part-African ancestry, we have comparable data only from the late eighteenth century onwards. In Cajamarca, the percentage of *forasteros* (Indigenous migrants and their descendants) varied throughout the eighteenth century, from between 33 and 49 per cent. The entire *Intendencia* (not the province) of Valladolid comprised around 13 per cent *laboríos* and *vagos*. This contrasted with almost 29 per cent of free mulattos and Blacks and almost 59 per cent of *indios de pueblo* in 1805.[46] In the 1795 general census, the *corregimiento* of Cajamarca comprised 12 per cent Spaniards, 59 per cent Indigenous people, 28 per cent mestizos, less than 1 per cent free Blacks, and less than 1 per cent enslaved.[47] Therefore, demographic characteristics are another argument for comparing the two regions, since the majority of the respective population was Indigenous, with very few enslaved Blacks and significantly different with regard to the free Afrodescendant population.

All the categorizations mentioned in the preceding paragraphs were not only social, but also legal and fiscal. Only by comparing regions in different Spanish viceroyalties can we see which aspects of the colonial organization of labour, mobility, and fiscality were generalized features and which reflected a different pre-Hispanic organization of tribute, labour, and migration, as well as local differences in social and economic structure.

Fiscal Categorizations and their Entanglements with Labour

When establishing fiscal categorizations, the Spanish administration made a distinction among its subjects.[48] The fiscal categorization assigned to a person or group determined how much money, goods, and labour they were required to surrender to the Spanish authorities; labour was an essential part of this requirement. The crown and its representatives in Spanish America often allocated this labour to private Spanish enterprises. Generally, in the first half of the colonial period, the place in which one had to pay tribute depended on to whom one was ascribed (personal association). From

[44] Jorge Silva Riquer, "La construcción de la hacienda pública en Michoacán, 1821–1895", in *idem* (ed.), *Historia de la hacienda pública en Michoacán, 1786–1951. Una historia larga* (Morelia, 2014), p. 111. The size of the Tarascan State has been calculated at 70,000–75,000 square kilometres. Albiez-Wieck, *Contactos exteriores del Estado tarasco*. The federal state of Michoacán covers 59,864 square kilometres. Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Geografía e Informática, "Aspectos geográficos Michoacán 2021", p. 15. Available at: https://www.inegi.org.mx/contenidos/app/areasgeograficas/resumen/resumen_16.pdf; last accessed 1 September 2025.

[45] Hugo Pereyra Plasencia, "Bosquejo histórico del corregimiento de Cajamarca", *Boletín del Instituto Riva-Agüero*, 23 (1996), pp. 173–239, 187, 202; Noble David Cook, *Demographic Collapse: Indian Peru, 1520–1620* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 182.

[46] Numbers calculated using the software by Martha Terán: Terán, *Tributos tardíos de la Nueva España*.

[47] John Robert Fisher, *Government and Society in Colonial Peru: The Intendant System 1784–1814* (London, 1970), p. 253.

[48] Stefan Hirschauer, "Un/doing Differences. Die Kontingenz sozialer Zugehörigkeiten", *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, 43:3 (2014), pp. 170–191.

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1645 onwards, the Spanish authorities increasingly tried to privilege place of residence as the key factor determining where one had to pay (territorial association).[49]

The broadest fiscal classifications were similar throughout Spanish America, namely: Spaniard/creole; mestizo; mulatto and free Black; enslaved; and Indigenous people (*indios*). However, there was a wide array of subcategorizations for those of Indigenous and African descent that differed from province to province and from viceroyalty to viceroyalty. As a general rule, categorizations were hereditary. This became complicated when people categorized differently had children together. In such cases, the offspring of a married couple were generally ascribed the father's categorization; individuals born outside wedlock inherited the mother's. The enslaved always inherited their mother's categorization. However, these general rules were not always followed, and disputes about the "correct" categorizations involved questions of legitimacy, ancestry, official categorization, and public reputation. When people migrated, they often changed their categorization. It is the categorizations of migrants and their descendants as well as of people of "mixed" ancestry that saw the most differences between Peru and New Spain.[15] As most categorizations were hereditary, not all those classified as "migrants" had actually migrated. Another factor of relevance was the question of landownership, since "migrants" were not supposed to have access to communal Indigenous land, which by law was collectively held by the "sedentary" *indios*.[50]

The Peruvian Categorizations

The Peruvian fiscal system developed several categorizations for the Indigenous population. Besides the *indio originario*, tied to a certain Indigenous community, the most prominent classification was that of the *indio forastero*, applied to those regarded as not entirely belonging to the Indigenous community to which they were attached. Next in importance was the *yanacona*. The motive for becoming a *forastero* seems to have been primarily to obtain fiscal privileges consisting of exemption from the obligation to provide labour (*mita*) and exemption from the obligation to pay tribute – or at least to pay less than the *indios originarios*.[51]

[49] Albiez-Wieck and Gil Montero, "The Emergence of Colonial Fiscal Categorizations"; Raquel Gil Montero and Sarah Albiez-Wieck, "Changing the Organization of Colonial Obligations: From Personal to Territorial Association in the Spanish Viceroyalty of Peru", in Ulrike Ludwig and Peter Oestmann (eds), *Formen der Vereinheitlichung | Modes of Standardization* (forthcoming).

[50] While Indigenous people were legally and fiscally categorized as migrants, such as *forasteros* in Peru and *laborío*s in New Spain, they were not always actually migrating, since only their ancestors had been migrants. At the same time, people not categorized as migrants often did move, for example in response to seasonal demands for labour. What characterized them was their belonging to an Indigenous community, with its corresponding obligations, such as rotative labour obligations that often entailed migration and privileges, including access to land. Furthermore, they were subject to the local, mostly Indigenous authorities called *caciques* (or sometimes *curacas* in the Andes). These people, termed *indios originarios*, "originally Indians" in Peru, and *indios de pueblo*, "town-Indians" in New Spain, are therefore not correctly labelled as sedentary. The main difference really lay in the distinction between belonging and non-belonging, but this difference was not clear-cut, and people moved on a continuum between both extremes.

[51] According to Wightman, *Indigenous Migration and Social Change*, p. 130, the *forasteros* of the Cuzco area did not pay tribute. In the material for the Cajamarca region in northern Peru I have been studying, *forasteros* generally paid a reduced tribute rate called a *quinto*.

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In contrast to the Spanish categorization *forastero, yanacona* was originally a pre-Hispanic classification denoting servants often relocated to carry out specific tasks.[52] Spanish colonial *yanaconas* were differentiated according to their assignment. They included those dependent directly on the king – the *yanaconas del rey* – and those working for other Spaniards on haciendas, in textile or sugar mills – the *yanaconas de españoles*.[53] In the eighteenth century, in some regions, *yanacona* came to be synonymous with Indigenous people unattached to an Indigenous community, often working as dependent labourers on private agricultural estates.

Despite the differences, in several regions *yanacona* became closely associated with *forastero*.[54] This shows how, in practice, different classifications overlapped when people from different categorizations shared similar socioeconomic positions. In several documents from Cajamarca from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the terms *forastero* and *yanacona*, especially *yanacona del rey*, were used synonymously, or as two similar characteristics of one and the same person.[55] The association of *forasteros* with *yanaconas del rey* was probably due to the fact that, at least in Cajamarca in northern Peru, both paid their tribute directly to the king and not through the Indigenous lords (the *caciques*) and governors, who handed in the tribute of their subjects collectively and were also responsible for its completeness. In Cajamarca, the special tribute of the *forasteros* was called *quinto*, "the fifth part", and the *forasteros* and *yanaconas del rey* were described as *quinteros*.[56] *Quinto* payers with "mixed" ancestry, including Indigenous and either Spanish or African elements, were denominated as *mixto quintero.* It was mostly *yanaconas de españoles* who worked as bonded labourers in Spanish enterprises, but this seems to have been less common in northern than in southern Peru and Charcas.

The New Spanish Categorizations

The term *forastero*, remarkably important in Peru, was used only rarely in New Spain's sources and employed only in the sense of "stranger". The term *vago* was used both for

[52]Laura Escobari de Querejazu, *Caciques, yanaconas y extravagantes. La sociedad colonial en Charcas s. XVI–XVIII* (La Paz, [2001] 2005); Karoline Noack, "Die Einheimischen, die Fremden und die Furcht. Umsiedlungspolitik im Inka-Staat", in Thomas Ertl (ed.), *Erzwungene Exile. Umsiedlung und Vertreibung in der Vormoderne (500 bis 1850)* (Frankfurt and New York, 2017), pp.107–130.

[53]Gil Montero, "Migración y tributación", pp. 49–50. For the relationship between the categorizations *forastero, yanacona del rey*, and *yanacona de españoles*, see Albiez-Wieck and Gil Montero, "The Emergence of Colonial Fiscal Categorizations".

[54]Nicolás Sánchez-Albornoz, *Indios y tributos en el Alto Perú* (1st edn, Lima, 1978), pp. 53–54; Francisco Cuena Boy, "Yanaconazgo y derecho romano. ¿Una conjunción extravagante", *Revista de Estudios Histórico–Jurídicos*, 28 (2006), p. 410, 417; Gil Montero, "Migración y tributación", pp. 49–50; Thierry Saignes, "Ayllus, mercado y coacción social. El reto de las migraciones internas en Charcas (siglo XVII)", in Olivia Harris, Brooke Larson, and Enrique Tandeter (eds), *La Participación indígena en los mercados surandinos. Estrategias y reproducción social siglos XVI a XX* (La Paz, 1987), pp. 138–145; Escobari de Querejazu, *Caciques, yanaconas y*, pp. 227–228.

[55]For example, ARC, Juan Olivito en nombre de los jueces oficiales Reales de Trujillo, 19 August 1622 to 12 September 1623, Corregimiento, Causas Ordinarias, Tributo, Leg. 01, Exp. 23.

[56]This was not the same as the *quinto* that had to be paid to the crown in metal extracted in Spanish America.

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peoples of all *calidades* who had no known place of residence and occupation, and as a fiscal categorization. This latter usage referred only to tributaries and is often found in documents from the 1750s, the period of Bourbon reforms. According to Terán, three tribute categorizations were in use in New Spain at that time: *indios de pueblo, indios laborío*s and *vagos*, and free Afrodescendants (called free Blacks and mulattos in the sources).[57] To understand the differences between these classifications, I must first explain the term *indio laborío*.

Laborío denominated a classification that stressed one's labour status, and with it one's dependent relationship with the "Spanish" masters. In contrast to *vago*, the term *laborío* was applied only to Indigenous people. The word evolved from the Caribbean Taino word *naborío*, which referred to Indigenous people in the very early days of colonization, even before the conquest of Mexico. They were obliged to serve the Spanish for two lifetimes. In Peru *naborío* was replaced by the term *yanacona*.[58] In New Spain, the word *naborío* was gradually replaced by *laborío*, probably due to the work of these Indigenous servants in agriculture and mining, so called *labores. Laborío* designated a tribute categorization that referred to Indigenous people who were not *indios de pueblo* and therefore had no right to use the communal lands of the Indigenous communities. As such, they had to pay less tribute than the *indios de pueblo*. They worked mostly on haciendas and in mines, and were also known as *gañanes* in central New Spain.[59] Apart from Indigenous people, Afrodescendants also often worked on haciendas (as well as in textile and sugar mills), which explains the close association between the tribute categorization "mulatto" and *laborío* referred to below.

*Laborío*s can be functionally compared with the Peruvian *yanaconas*.[60] As with Afrodescendants working on haciendas, their Spanish masters paid their tribute for them.[61] These workers were supposed to be completely isolated from their home communities.[62] This isolation was certainly the characteristic that linked the *laborío*s to the *vagos*. However, not all *laborío*s were completely isolated from their communities, and not all were subject to Spanish masters. Some returned permanently to their home

[57]Terán, "Geografía de los", pp. 83–84. The evolution towards a tripartite classification of tribute payers (*indios de pueblo, laborío*s/*vagos*, and "mulattos") seems to have been gradual and only fully implemented in the eighteenth century with the stricter enforcement of tax legislation during the Bourbon reforms. Archivo General de la Nación, Mexico, Mexico City [hereafter, AGNM], Información de limpieza de sangre, producida por Juan Miguel Chacón y Bustos, 1793-1805, Indiferente Virreinal, Caja 891, Exp. 03, 9–11; AGNM, Cuenta de Don Antonio Perez Fernandez, 20 December 1799, Tributos, vol. 04, Exp. 11; AGNM, Propuesta hecha por el contador de tributos, 1762, 23 January 1762, Indiferente Virreinal, Caja 5670, Exp. 56; AGNM, Reglamento y Ordenanzas que, con las Adiciones que se expresan, manda su Majestad observar, Tributos, vol. 23, Exp. 14, fs. 356–388, in Terán, *Tributos tardíos de la Nueva España*, p. 26.

[58]Chantal Cramaussel, *Poblar la frontera. La provincia de Santa Bárbara en Nueva Vizcaya durante los siglos XVI y XVII* (Zamora, 2006), p. 234.

[59]See Riley, "Crown Law and Rural Labor in New Spain".

[60]This argument has already been adduced for the equivalent *gañanes* by Riley, "Crown Law and Rural Labor in New Spain".

[61]AGNM, Exención de María Joaquin Uchu Inca Tupa Yupanqui, 1793, Tributos, vol. 30, Exp. 2; "Artículos 124–141 de la Real ordenanza Madrid, 1786, pp. 145–169", in Terán, *Tributos tardíos de la Nueva España*, pp. 72–82.

[62]Cramaussel, *Poblar la frontera*, pp. 237, 243; Celina G. Becerra Jiménez, *Indios, españoles y africanos en los altos de Jalisco. Jalostotitlán, 1650–1780* (Guadalajara, 2015), pp. 49–50.

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towns after having worked on a hacienda,[63] or worked only temporarily there and continued to be enrolled as tribute payers in their home towns. Especially for some mining regions in the north, there were cases of self-employed *laborío*s who supplied the mines with wood and coal. According to Cramaussel, the independence of these Indigenous people was more the exception than the rule.[64] In any case, the degree of isolation from their communities – and the degree of freedom – varied considerably.

The exact tribute rates varied over time and space, but mulattos usually paid more than *indios laborío*s, and *laborío*s paid less than *indios de pueblo*. However, *laborío*s seem to have been obliged to pay from the age of fourteen, while the *indios de pueblo* started paying at the age of eighteen.[65] It seems that the lower rate of tribute for *laborío*s was a strong incentive for Indigenous people to leave their towns.[66] Despite the lower tribute rates, many *laborío*s and mulattos – or rather their masters – seem to have evaded paying tribute.[67] To oversee all these tributaries, rules were adopted to ensure the authorities would be notified every time *laborío*s left or entered their respective haciendas, although one doubts whether these rules were obeyed.

The mobility and "un-rootedness" of the *vagos* were also mirrored in the procedures for tribute exaction. At least in Michoacán, *vago* tributes were, in most regions, handed in later than the tributes levied on the *indios de pueblo*. This was because these *vagos* left their jurisdiction during the planting and harvesting season and returned only after the dates generally applicable to tribute collection, a practice central authorities began to combat at the end of the eighteenth century.[68] This form of temporal migration was difficult to incorporate into colonial legislation, which aimed to tackle vagabondism by requiring everyone to have a fixed residence or a known master, while acknowledging the difficulties involved in implementing this comprehensively.

Compared with Peru, with regard to tribute categorizations the administration in New Spain seems to have made the mobility of its Indigenous population less visible and paid less attention to their differential role – at least before the eighteenth century – probably because in Michoacán no comparable categorizations existed in pre-Hispanic times, whereas in Peru there was a visible continuity with the pre-Hispanic *yanaconas*, albeit with obvious differences. Nevertheless, in Michoacán, too, *laborío*s constituted a labour force crucial to the region's economy.

[63] Such was the case of Salvador Guerra, from the town of Zinapécuaro in Michoacán: Archivo Histórico Municipal de Morelia, Morelia, Mexico [hereafter, AHMM], Salvador Guerra, vecino de Zinapequaro 1787, Hacienda, Caja 5, Exp. 14.

[64] Cramaussel, *Poblar la frontera*, p. 242.

[65] AHMM, Mandamiento del virrey 1684, Gobierno, Caja 1, Exp. 15.

[66] AGNM, Luis Gonzaga Jimenez, 22 July 1800, Tributos, vol. 4, Exp. 12. The indigenous people who left their home towns were listed as absentees, *ausentes*, in the tribute lists of those towns. After ten years, they became "absolute absentees", *ausentes absolutos*. Article 21 in AGNM, "Instruccion á que se han de arreglar los Comisionados Jueces de Matrículas deTributarios en las que formen en las Provincias de Nueva España, 2 de diciembre de 1793, Tributos, vol. 60, exp. 9, fos. 209–223, in Terán, *Tributos tardíos de la Nueva España*.

[67] For example, AHMM, El comisionado de la real Hacienda, 1798, Hacienda, Caja 6, Exp. 17.

[68] AGNM, Los ministros de Real Hacienda de Valladolid, 13 April 1791, Tributos, vol. 06, Exp. 24, f. 277r.

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Struggles for a Greater Degree of Freedom in Cajamarca and Michoacán

Mobile individuals as well as dependent labourers (often one and the same) challenged their classification through migration and petitioning. Both actions were deeply entangled, since it was often migrants and their descendants who could most easily petition for a change in categorization – much like individuals whose ancestors had belonged to divergent categorizations. This was because the ability to change categorization reflected the link between categorization and public reputation. A categorization could therefore be altered more easily when a migrant moved to a new environment in which no or few people were aware of their background. In the petitions, public reputation is mirrored in witness accounts.

These petitions were directed at the colonial authorities and aimed at defending or changing one's fiscal categorization, often with the aim of avoiding labour obligations. They initiated a legal procedure in the realm of fiscal law. Most petitioners were directed to the regional authority, the *Corregidor* or *alcalde mayor* – and, after the Bourbon reforms, to the *subdelegado*. In more difficult cases, the petition was forwarded to the Viceroy, or higher authorities of the Royal Treasury in Peru and New Spain. They were almost never sent to Spain. This explains why most of these petitions are found in local and regional archives and some in the respective national archive, and, at least for Cajamarca and Michoacán, none in the Archive of the Indies in Seville. The petitioners often argued that they had been incorrectly registered in the latest tribute list, and they would present evidence to substantiate their claim. The evidence requirements were not formalized until the eighteenth century, but even then they were not always respected. The petitions therefore included a selection of the following rather than all of them (as theoretically required): copies of parish records; copies from tribute lists; tribute receipts; and witness testimony. Often, the claim would be opposed by a local governor, *cacique*, or Spanish hacienda owner, again with evidence to support their case.

To better understand this process, I studied 133 petitions from Cajamarca and thirty-four from Michoacán that included a broad variety of disputed fiscal categorizations. In Cajamarca, sixty-three involved the categorization *yanacona*; in Michoacán, only three clearly mentioned *laborío*s – one an Indigenous *vago* and two unspecified "tributaries". The petitions ranged in time from the late sixteenth to the early nineteenth century, but in both cases over half related to the eighteenth century. In what follows, I highlight some results regarding the *yanacona de españoles* and *indios laborío*s categorizations, with special emphasis on developments in the late colonial period.

I focus on these categorizations of Indigenous people because they were key in both regions studied, but other authors have shown that free and even enslaved Afrodescendants presented similar petitions. Especially interesting is the case of enslaved petitioners in seventeenth-century Lima studied by Graubart who tried, without success, to be equated with Indigenous people and thus freed.[69] They thereby underlined the freedom of the Indigenous population. As Pereyra Plasencia has shown

[69]Karen B. Graubart, "*Pesa Más La Libertad*: Slavery, Legal Claims, and the History of Afro-Latin American Ideas", *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 78:3 (2021), pp. 427–458.

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in his study of an uprising against an *obraje* in seventeenth-century central Peru, Indigenous peoples could respond violently even to rumours that they might be legally enslaved.[70] Glave has pointed out that both Indigenous labour service and the exaction of tribute could provoke violence, but also that Indigenous people invested considerable effort when petitioning for their rights.[71]

In Peru, *obraje* workers were generally Indigenous. In New Spain, this was not always the case, as shown, *inter alia*, by Sierra Silva and Velasco Murillo for seventeenth-century central and northern New Spain.[72] This was a characteristic feature also observed in Michoacán, where mulattos and *laboríos* worked side by side, something mirrored in the petitions.

Yanaconas in Cajamarca

In Peru, rotational labour shifts created a much heavier burden and lasted longer than in New Spain. Opponents were often more interested in labour service from the petitioners than tribute payments. Conversely, petitioners insisted either on not having to perform the *mita* or not being *yanaconas de españoles*.[73] Also in Cajamarca, almost all petitioners, regardless of categorization, generally insisted on their exemption from the *mita*, as well as a reduction in tribute payment. What is surprising, however, is that the first petition involving the categorization *yanaconas de españoles* (not to be confused with *yanaconas del rey*) from Cajamarca dates from as late as 1776.[74] This contrasts with the broad importance of this categorization from the late sixteenth century onwards in southern Peru and the Audiencia de Charcas.[75] As we know from other types of source, *yanaconas de españoles* existed earlier in Cajamarca, but their labour force was apparently less important than elsewhere and the need for dependent labour was apparently covered mostly by *mita* labour and more or less free "migrant" labour. Another probable explanation of why we do not have earlier petitions is that, prior to that date,

[70]Pereyra Plasencia, "Mita obrajera, idolatría y rebelión", p. 225.

[71]Luis M. Glave, "The 'Republic of Indians' in Revolt (c.1680–1790)", in Frank Salomon and Stuart B. Schwartz (eds), *South America: The Cambridge History of the Native Peoples of the Americas: Vol. III, Part II* (Cambridge, 1999), pp. 502–557; Luis M. Glave, "Gestiones transatlánticas. Los indios ante la trama del poder virreinal y las composiciones de tierras (1646)", *Revista Complutense de Historia de América*, 34 (2008), pp. 85–106. See also Bianca Premo, *The Enlightenment on Trial: Ordinary Litigants and Colonialism in the Spanish Empire* (New York, 2017).

[72]Dana Velasco Murillo and Pablo Miguel Sierra Silva, "Mine Workers and Weavers: Afro-Indigenous Labor Arrangements and Interactions in Puebla and Zacatecas, 1600–1700", in Dana Velasco Murillo, Mark Lentz, and Margarita R. Ochoa (eds), *City Indians in Spain's American Empire: Urban Indigenous Society in Colonial Mesoamerica and Andean South America, 1530–1810* (Brighton, 2012), pp. 104–127.

[73]Gil Montero and Albiez-Wieck, "Putting Tribute into Perspective".

[74]ARC, El protector general de naturales Josep Antonio de Arce, 13 January 1776, Corregimiento, Protector de Naturales, Tributos, Leg 02. To be clear: petitions involving other fiscal categorizations, including *yanaconas del rey*, existed much earlier. We have petitions by *forasteros* and *yanaconas del rey* from as early as the seventeenth century.

[75]Raquel Gil Montero, "Entre el trabajo libre y forzado. Los yanaconas rurales de Charcas (Bolivia) en el siglo XVII", *Colonial Latin American Review*, 27:3 (2018), pp. 355–373; Sánchez-Albornoz, "Mita, migraciones".

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there were fewer restrictions on the *yanaconas de españoles*, and thus less to petition against. Or, put differently, the degree of dependency of *yanaconas de españoles* seemed to increase in the late colonial period, in some cases making their status comparable to that of indebted peons.

For the period 1776 to 1817, I identified twenty-five petitions in which opponents tried to have individuals from various categorizations registered as *yanaconas de españoles*. These petitions show that the translocal belonging and free movement of tributaries was increasingly restricted not only by the royal authorities, but also by Spanish masters of haciendas and *estancias*. They tried to permanently retain the tributaries who had moved to work in their enterprises, getting them registered as *yanacona de españoles*.[76] Sometimes, they asked the authorities to return to their enterprise labourers who had fled,[77] or they forced them to stay, alleging debts.[78] These and other tributaries tried to resist restitution and petitioned the authorities, pointing to their belonging to the *pueblos de indios* and occasionally declaring that they had been forced to work for their master or that he had registered them as *yanacona* against their will and without their knowledge. Occasionally, they referred to being treated like slaves – something we never see in the New Spanish petitions. Especially interesting in this context is the 1817 petition by Santos Romero, who explicitly compares *yanaconaje* to slavery and insists on his free status as a tributary, in this case a *quintero*:

> Santos Romero *misto quintero* from the town of Jesus […] has to justify his freedom […] says […] that there are occasions in which innocence is the cause of a man ending up in the net of slavery, but when it comes unjustly, there is no doubt that by the mercy of god his clamours will reach the compassion of the king and of justice. It has seemed to many that being born into the class of taxpayers degrades them: Of course there is some basis for this way of thinking, and it is because the powerful consider enslaving those of indigenous nature ["de naturalesa yndica"] in their haciendas, matriculating them without their consent with the name of *yanaconas*; but I say, it is happiness in the man to have been born into that class of contributors, because it implies the favour and protection of his M. who has conferred on him many privileges and exemptions, and for him there is no such slavery; but on the contrary much freedom.[79]

In this example, we see the tributaries themselves linking their fiscal categorization to their degree of dependency and rejecting their status as dependent labourers. Santos Romero underlines, furthermore, that his migration to the hacienda was temporary

[76]Generally, the documents used only the term *yanacona*, but it is clear they are not *yanaconas del rey*.

[77]See, for example, Archivo Regional de la Libertad, Trujillo, Peru [hereafter, ARLL], Autos promovidos por el Capitán Don Josef de Herrera, 17–21 February 1789, Intendencia, Causas Ordinarias, Leg. 300, Exp. 130.

[78]ARC, Dn Mariano Castro 1809, Intendencia, Tributos, Leg. 01, Exp. 36.

[79]ARC, Santos Romero, mixto quintero del pueblo de Jesús, solicitando que no se lo considere en la matrícula de tributarios de la Hda Galic por ser indio libre, 2 July 1817, Intendencia, Tributos, Leg. 01, f. 4r–vs. All translations from Spanish quotes are mine.

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since he had continued paying the tribute back in his home town and therefore rightfully belonged there and not to the hacienda. He was there only temporarily, to pay a debt. Furthermore, he did not descend from the *yanaconas* but from a mestizo father and a *quintera* mother. His opponents, however, argued that he had permanently settled at the hacienda, with his livestock and family. His case shows that there was a tendency towards debt bondage on haciendas in late-colonial Cajamarca. As early as 1795, the petitioner Juan Gómez Mendoza had made a similar case, "claiming his freedom",[80] since he was wrongly claimed to be a *yanacona* by a hacienda owner and even put in chains. Like Santos Romero, he argued that he was in fact a free *quintero* and tribute payer in his home town. In 1814, Pablo Zavaleta also protested against being forced to work as a *yanacona* on a hacienda. In his case, opposition from the authorities and hacienda owners was even greater, and they cast doubts on his supposed ties to an Indigenous town.[81]

In twenty-five of the analysed cases, one petitioner claimed to be a mestizo, and five petitioners self-identified as *mixtos quinteros*, one of them more specifically as *mulato quintero*. The remaining nineteen self-identified as *indios*, fourteen of them more precisely as *indios originarios*, four as *forasteros* or *quinteros*, and one as *yanacona de españoles*. The latter case from 1794 is interesting, since it is the only one in which the petitioners did not deny being *yanaconas de españoles*. Manuel Quispe, Juan de la Cruz, and Thomas Nuñes claimed they had relocated from the hacienda del Cardón to the hacienda Porcón three or four years earlier, where they were subsequently registered as *yanaconas*. However, they claimed to belong originally to the hacienda del Cardón and petitioned to be deregistered from Porcón. Neither its owner nor the authorities were willing to acquiesce, and their petition failed. Though here we can observe some initial freedom of movement, it seems to have been restricted at some point. Whether this was owing to a debt that they had contracted, the intentions of the owner of the hacienda Porcón, and/or his complicity with the authorities remains speculative.

The numbers of self-ascriptions in the twenty-five petitions indicate that the overwhelming majority of petitioners were Indigenous people – some of them possibly with a degree of African ancestry – who had formerly been free tributaries and later became *yanaconas de españoles*. In their petitions, they argued that, following this change in their categorization, they could no longer freely determine where to live and work and in which categorization to be registered, thereby clearly becoming trapped in the status of dependent labour that in some – though not all – cases was linked to indebtedness.

[80] Archivo General de la Nación, Perú, Lima, Peru [hereafter, AGNP], Juan Gómez Mendoza, indio tributario de Chota, sobre se le exluya del servicio de Yanacona de la estancia de Quilcate. Ante Francisco de Gil Taboada y Lemos, virrey del Perú, 5 October 1795, Superior Gobierno, Sección Gobierno, Serie Político-Administrativo, Go-Bi 1, Leg. 45, Cuad. 600, f. 7r.

[81] ARLL, Autos que sigue Pablo Zavaleta, indio español del pueblo de Caxabamba, partido de Huamachuco y residente en esta ciudad; sobre que se le deje quieto y pacífico en la expresada reducción de Caxabamba, continuando con sus labranzas y entables de que subsiste honradamente con su mujer y su hijo legítimo, 22 July 1814, Intendencia, Causas Ordinarias, Leg. 346, Exp. 1126.

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Regarding the percentage of *yanaconas de españoles* in the total population, we seldom have the quantitative data that would allow us to better evaluate the contextualization of the numbers of petitions by them.[82] What we generally find in the census/tribute lists for the entire area of the *corregimiento* Cajamarca is the tribute-paying Indigenous population but no subcategorizations such as *yanaconas de españoles*.[83] For the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the categorization *yanacona de español* is not defined in the tribute lists and inspections.[84] The most complete demographic data we have for the eighteenth century is from the 1786 Census by Bishop Martínez de Compañón who, according to Vollmer, based his data – with the exception of Huelgayoc – on the census by Miguel de Espinach from 1779, but he did not further subdivide the general categorization "indio" either. The same applies to the 1792 Census by Viceroy Gil de Taboada.[85] What we do have for some towns, or single haciendas and *estancias*, are lists of their *yanaconas de españoles*, though not enough to allow us to sketch a complete picture. However, a systematic analysis of these scattered lists, which is still pending, could give us at least some preliminary ideas.[86]

*Laborío*s in Michoacán

Regarding petitions, in some respects the situation of *indios laborío*s in Michoacán resembled that of the *yanaconas de españoles* in Cajamarca. We know from other sources that *laborío*s had existed for much longer, but they appear in petitions only from 1756 onwards. In all three petitions clearly involving *laborío*s, the petitioners claimed to have been incorrectly registered as Afrodescendants.

What is different in these petitions, which are far fewer in number than in Cajamarca, is that, in all of them, the *indios laborío*s were closely associated with the free-Afrodescendant categorization of the mulatto, which, unlike the mulattos in Peru, was mostly subject to tribute payment. Petitioners placed a stronger focus on having to pay less tribute and on distancing themselves from their African ancestry, which had the social stigma of past slavery attached to it, more so than from

[82]For the *forasteros* and *yanaconas del rey*, the situation is at least somewhat better. See Albiez-Wieck, *Taxing Difference in Peru and New Spain*; Gil Montero and Albiez-Wieck, "Putting Tribute into Perspective".

[83]See Günter Vollmer, *Bevölkerungspolitik und Bevölkerungsstruktur im Vizekönigreich Peru zu Ende der Kolonialzeit (1741–1821)* (Berlin, 1967).

[84]Gil Montero and Albiez-Wieck, "Putting Tribute into Perspective".

[85]Vollmer, *Bevölkerungspolitik und Bevölkerungsstruktur*; Baltasar Jaime Martínez Compañón y Bujanda, Manuel Ballesteros Gaibrois, and Daniel Restrepo Manrique, *Trujillo del Perú. Apéndice II* (Madrid, 1993).

[86]Examples include: ARLL, Autos promovidos por el Capitán Don Josef de Herrera, vecino del pueblo de San Marcos – Cajamarca, dueño de la estancia de Saparcon y tierras nombradas El Molino en Cajamarca; sobre que los indios ausentes de la parte y lugar donde se hallaren, se estraigan y se le entreguen según consta en la memoria que presenta, 17-21 February 1789, Intendencia, Causas Ordinarias, Leg. 300, Exp. 130; ARLL, Pedimento del Señor Pablo Mantilla, vecinos de la Villa de Caxamarca; sobre que Don Joaquín de Castañeda, les deje en el libre uso de sus personas, para que de este modo se reduscan a dicha Villa de Caxamarca y allí continuen con la paga de sus tributos y cumplan con las demas obligaciones de aquella su República, 23 March 1790, Intendencia, Pedimentos, Leg. 435, Exp. 3447; ARC, Padrón de tributarios del partido de Cajamarca, actualizada por el subdelegado juez real don Joaquín Miguel de Arnaco y el apoderador Fiscal don Bernardo Borié, 1803, Intendencia, Tributos, Leg. 1, Exp. 32.

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their being forced to work in Spanish enterprises. In Michoacán petitions, the development towards a terminology of racialization is clearer than in the Cajamarcan ones.[87]

Despite the official abolition of the *repartimiento* labour service in 1632, we have evidence from sources from the late eighteenth century in which Indigenous people from Michoacán were forced to migrate to the northern mines and work there in the "*laborío de minas*".[88] However, this dependent labour seems to have been exclusive to mines and cannot be found in haciendas. With respect to haciendas, I do not have petitions from all the periods Riley covers. He stated that *gañanes* – which were more or less the central Mexican equivalent of the *labores* – were registered on hacienda tribute rolls in the early seventeenth century, but they were free to move once their tribute debt had been paid off. This changed during the late seventeenth century, when their status approximated debt peonage but reverted to a greater freedom of movement in the eighteenth century, and they started to disappear from the records in the late eighteenth century.[89]

In Michoacán, we have very few late eighteenth-century petitions by *labores*, but in all three cases (which alluded to more than three individuals), the *labores* were not forced to work and stay on haciendas and in *obrajes*. So, though based on a small number of petitions and only with respect to haciendas, there seems to have been a development in Michoacán similar to the one that took place for the *gañanes* in central Mexico studied by Riley. However, more than the pursuit of greater freedom (which was, of course, also an aim), a distancing from African ancestry played an important role in Michoacán petitions. In all three of them, the categorization of *indio laborío* seemed more beneficial than that of mulatto since, as *labores*, they not only paid less tribute but were also further detached from the stigma of slavery. Again, they claimed this as their fiscal status. Victoriano Alvarado, a worker in a Valladolid *obraje*, stated in 1808 that he was an *indio laborío* as

> [C]learly appears in the four letters of payment, which I solemnly present, on the day in question, to deprive me of this right by demanding it from me as a mulatto, not having the slightest foundation to infer me in a grievance that is not only detrimental to my person, but that will transcend as a contagion to all my descendants, since I, as well as they, besides being unjustly taxed with the difference that exists between what the mulattos pay and the penalty imposed on the yndios, are also deprived of the rights and privileges that the indulgence of S.M. has deigned to grant us.
>
> It does not admit doubt that following the condition of the parents the children enjoy by necessary consequence the same privileges and rights granted to their class, and mine having been yndio as is sufficiently accredited without need of another proof than the document of reservation that I exhibit in a half quarter

[87] See AGNM, Victoriano Alvarado, 26 September 1808, Real Hacienda, Tributos, vol. 18, Exp. 19; AHMM, José María Ramires, 1804, Hacienda, Caja 6, Exp. 30.

[88] El Virrey, 1779, Indios, vol. 66, Exp. 165, AGNM; El virrey, 1779, Indios, vol. 66, Exp. 161, AGNM, f. 201r. See also Gavira Márquez, "'Entiendan que desobedecen".

[89] Riley, "Crown Law and Rural Labor in New Spain".

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> page with the due solemnity, it follows necessarily that I too am yndio and that enjoying the same privileges the royal right of the Tribute should be exacted from me.[90]

It is noteworthy that he presents the fiscal status of an Indigenous person as a privilege, thereby stating his superiority vis-à-vis mulattos. Another petition, this time a collective one, defends the petitioners' categorization as *indios laborío*s. It was presented in 1804 by Vicente Valdovinos de León, his brother, and some friends. They argued that they, too, had been incorrectly registered as free Afrodescendants and as such had to pay a larger tribute than the *laborío*s. They rejected this "infamous quality of being *pardo*".[91] Like the above Cajamarcan petitioners, they had been living temporarily on a hacienda. However, unlike the Cajamarcans, they had not been forced to stay there as dependent labourers; "only" their fiscal status had been changed to free Afrodescendants against their will. The last of the three petitions was presented by a hacienda owner. He reported that the workers on his hacienda had fled because the Spanish authorities had registered them as free Afrodescendants instead of *indios laborío*s.[92] We have no record of the voice of these workers themselves, so we cannot be sure whether the hacienda owner had tried to force them to work, but at least we have no clear indication in similar documents that he did.

To better contextualize the three petitions mentioned here, it is interesting to look at quantitative demographic data on *laborío*s in Michoacán. Unfortunately, they were not comprehensively registered before the Bourbon reforms in the eighteenth century. We do, however, have some data based on two late eighteenth-century reports. According to Serrano Ortega, who reports the numbers collected by Antonio de Riaño, in 1792/1793 *laborío*s and *vagos* together comprised twenty-two per cent of the Indigenous population of the *Intendencia* of Valladolid.[93] The "Estados generales de Tributos" of 1805 by Juan Ordoñez show that in that year, *laborío*s and *vagos* comprised 13.22 per cent of the tributary population in the *Intendencia* of Valladolid, a smaller percentage than the *mulatos y negros libres* (28.49 per cent) and the *indios de pueblo* (58.29 per cent). The total number of entire tributaries was 45,235 in that year, which, according to Terán, meant 171,160 tributary individuals.[94] Though we cannot determine the exact number of individuals categorized as *laborío*s, the petitions we do have open only a small window into their world. However, since their voices

[90] AGNM, Victoriano Alvarado, indio laborío residente de esta ciudad, sobre que se le borre de la matrícula de mulatos y se le pase a la de indios, 26 September 1808, Real Hacienda, Tributos, vol. 18, Exp. 19, f. 392r.

[91] AHMM, José María Ramires, Francisco Reyes, José Maria Garcia, Pedro Valdovinos, Vizente Valdovinos, Joaquín Fabián, José Trinidad Muñoz, Bernardino de Sena, indios del pueblo de San Juan Bautista Puruandiro ante el subdelegado y senor intendente José Maria pide que se les retire de la matrícula para pagar impuestos en calidad de mulatos que les llegó pues no pueden pagar una mayor cantidad de la que han pagado como indios que son, 1804, Hacienda, Caja 6, Exp. 30, f. 1r.

[92] AGNM, Consulta sobre si los expósitos son reservados de tributar por esta calidad, 5 January 1799 to 7 September 1804, Tributos, vol. 55, Exp. 12.

[93] José Antonio Serrano Ortega, "Ciudadanos naturales. Pueblos de indios y ayuntamientos en Guanajuato, 1820–1827", in Juan Ortiz Escamilla and José Antonio Serrano Ortega (eds), *Ayuntamientos y liberalismo gaditano en México* (Zamora and Xalapa, 2007), pp. 411–440, 414.

[94] Numbers calculated using the software developed by Terán, *Tributos tardíos de la Nueva España*.

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are seldom heard in the sources, it is still an important glimpse into the past of these people.

Conclusion

The Spanish Empire provided a set of spatial and social categorizations and barriers for the purpose of ordering colonial society. The fiscal system played a crucial role in this hierarchical ordering and was inextricably linked to socioeconomic position and dependent labour. One's fiscal categorization was an important indicator of one's degree of freedom. Despite the aim of the colonial authorities to establish a durable and precise social ordering, the tribute categorizations were ambivalent, flexible, and changed over time. Furthermore, they were contested and negotiated from below. This negotiation happened on the ground as well as on paper: individuals migrated in order to change their categorization, and they contested their classification by means of petitions, processes that were often intertwined.

Within the Spanish American colonies, there was a wide array of regionally differing subcategorizations of tribute payers, which were closely entangled with various forms of bonded labour. However, one Peruvian categorization with pre-Hispanic roots, that of the *yanacona*, and especially the *yanacona de españoles*, is functionally comparable to the New Spanish categorization of the *laborío*. Both stressed the position of being labourers dependent upon "Spaniards". But the degree and durability of the attachment to "Spaniards", and the detachment from Indigenous communities, varied considerably within these categorizations – and with it the degree of freedom. This varied also across time and space. While Cajamarca saw a development towards debt peonage for *yanaconas* (*de españoles*) towards the end of the colonial period, in Michoacán debt peonage was seemingly employed only for mineworkers. On haciendas and in *obrajes*, one problem for *indios laboríos* was that they were often (in their view) wrongly registered as free Afrodescendants (mulattos), and so had to pay a higher tribute and bear the stigma of slavery – though that did not seem to involve actual forced labour.

The existence of translocal forms of belonging as well as the legal instrument of the petition opened up spaces of negotiation that were employed strategically not only to improve one's social position, but also to achieve some very specific privileges or resources. Petitioners tried both to abolish labour obligations and to avoid being categorized as of African descent. However, the possibilities were limited, and the Indigenous as well as the Spanish authorities sometimes pushed back. Petitioners, and their opponents, shaped and modified the categorizations throughout the colonial period, showing a considerable degree of agency and making their voices heard. However, not all aspects of this agency left traces in the historical record. The documentation presented here provides a picture of either successful attempts to change categorization or of cases where petitioners felt obliged to defend their categorization. They tell us little about those individuals who changed their categorization without resorting to legal procedures, or who retained the same classification throughout their life.

Looking at the post-Independence period, it is interesting to see that, in Cajamarca, the *yanacona* categorization quickly disappeared, while the *quintero* persisted for

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several decades. For Michoacán, I have found no mention of the persistence of the term *laborío*, but in both regions many Indigenous and partly also Afrodescendant labourers gradually became indebted peons.[95] In Peru, this development continued a process that had already started before Independence, though not to the same extent as in Mexico.

[95] Adrian A. Bantjes, "The Mexican Revolution", in Thomas H. Holloway (ed.), *A Companion to Latin American History* (Oxford, 2011), pp. 330–346, 339; Heraclio Bonilla and Christine Hünefeldt, "Piura. Propuestas para una historia regional", Documento de trabajo 10, Historia 1 Instituto de Estudios Peruanos (Lima, 1986), pp. 13–14. Available at http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/laoap/iep/ddt010.pdf; last accessed 6 October 2014; D.A. Brading, *Haciendas and Ranchos in the Mexican Bajío, Léon 1700–1860* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 9; Monteiro, "Labor Systems", p. 228.

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