

On Behalf of my Community: Indigenous Insurrections in Late- Colonial Andes and Beyond

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Scholars contend that a triumphant Colonial government ultimately vanquished Andean Indigenous communities in the late-colonial era. While these arguments represent a general view of the outcome, it overlooks the fundamental transformations and nuances of the process. One of the key actors for the indigenous communities under colonial rule were the caciques (ethnic leaders). The colonial caciques played a critical role located at the contact zone between the colonial government and the indigenous communities. Most scholars conclude that the colonial regime erased the caciques in the aftermath of the late-colonial uprisings. Furthermore, scholars assert that the elimination of the caciques also decapitated the indigenous societies in the Andes.

Maqqe argues that a close examination of intra-community political dynamics reveals a remarkable process of political transformation from below. Indigenous communities in the late-colonial Andes gradually developed novel forms of resistance, increasingly perceiving caciques as community enemies. Community members collectively challenged and eventually replaced caciques with former secondary local figures of authority. Thus, while caciques did indeed decline and fall, the fundamental factor was the community actions from below rather than just colonial repressive policies from the top. This presentation focuses on late-colonial indigenous community politics, yet, essential political views and dynamics of the process can be recognized in more recent struggles in the Andes and similar efforts in the Americas.

About the presenter:

Dr. Maqqe is a Post-Doctoral Scholar at the Kellogg Institute for International Studies of the University of Notre Dame. He is also an honorary visiting faculty member at the Universidad Nacional del Altiplano, at Puno, Perú and the University of the Nouvelle GrandAnse, Haiti. His research interests include indigenous movements and popular sectors in Colonial and Post-Colonial Southern Andes. He examines the politics, language, and cultures of these Andean communities.

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