

LATIN AMERICAN CITIES: *A Special Teaching and Research Collection for The Americas*

In the January 1945 issue of *The Americas*, the North American anthropologist Robert Hayward Barlow contributed an item to the “Inter-American Notes” section, commenting on the public reopening of the Franciscan church at Santiago de Tlatelolco in Mexico City. Barlow described the first mass held in the church in 85 years, noting the dilapidated conditions of the sanctuary that had served for nearly a century as a repository for *pulque* and broken government furniture.¹ Steps from the church’s doorway amidst an industrial landscape of warehouses and railroad tracks lay the site of the temple complex that Barlow and his colleagues studied: evidence unearthed of the centuries-long urban history of Tlatelolco, subsumed into the emerging sprawl of mid-twentieth-century Mexico City.

Through this brief note, *The Americas* began its engagement with urban history and cities as a site of historical change in Latin America. This engagement grew substantially in subsequent decades as the journal’s focus expanded beyond Franciscan and frontier mission history and especially after the journal’s editorial reorganization in the late 1980s.² Barlow’s note offers subtle reminders of Tlatelolco’s place in the history of Mexico City: first as a market town and subordinate *altepetl* within the so-called Triple Alliance dominated by Tenochtitlan and later as a site of religious education and evangelization for indigenous elites in the colonial era. The church’s decline coincided with changing political winds in nineteenth-century independent Mexico, and the sanctuary doors were “padlocked violently when Maximilian was still an Austrian prince at Miramar.”³ The industrial transformation of the surrounding area erased Tlatelolco’s previously suburban relationship with the former viceregal capital of New Spain, whose name (*México*) now applied to the entire national territory.

The residents of the surrounding *barrios* who likely attended the 1944 mass dwelled in an area that became notorious within a quarter century as the site of the 1968 Tlatelolco Massacre. Today, the onsite museum commemorates this tragic history, while also

1. R. H. Barlow, “Restoration of Santiago de Tlatelolco,” *Americas* 1, no. 3 (January 1945): 355–356, <https://doi.org/10.2307/978162>.

2. Christopher Woolley, “Missions and Missionaries in the Americas: A Special Teaching and Research Collection of *The Americas*,” *Americas* 74, no. S2 (October 2017): S4–S13, <https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2017.90>. On the history of the journal, see Jay Harrison “New Spain, the Jesuits, and the Shaping of *The Americas*: An Interview with James D. Riley” *Americas* 81 no 2 (July 2024), 373-400.

3. Barlow, “Restoration of Santiago de Tlatelolco,” 356.

emphasizing the zone as a site of “alliances” at Tlatelolco—not just the uneven alliances imposed by generations of rulers based in México-Tenochtitlan but also Cold War-era initiatives in which post-revolutionary Mexico City played a part; for example, the nuclear prohibition Treaty of Tlatelolco in 1967 and the hosting of the United Nations (UN)-sponsored International Women’s Year in 1975.⁴ Tlatelolco’s long multifaceted history shows its embeddedness not just in the history of Mexico City but also in global history. Likewise, Latin America’s other cities have played major roles in shaping not just their own nations but flows of people, wealth, and ideas across the hemisphere.

As Brodwyn Fischer noted in a recent bibliographical overview, Latin American urban history is a “capacious field,” one that by nature of its subject has operated in “intense dialogue with social sciences and cultural studies.” The study of urban society and culture blossomed alongside the rapid expansion of urban Latin America post-1945, as natural population increase, rural–urban migration, and enduring inequalities both between city and country and within the city itself created the region’s modern megacities (approaching or surpassing 10 million inhabitants). Similar to the layers of urban sediment that surround Tlatelolco, the dynamics of different historical periods overlap and interact with each other. Understanding the dynamics of urban history provides insight into how these areas of dense population, economic growth, and cultural ferment transform over time. In a similar way, the idea of the city in Latin America has not remained static over time either, as cities’ relationships have changed both in relation to the countryside but also in relation to their position in the global economy. The term “urban history” thus seeks to capture all aspects of historical cities, from specific sites to the ideas and processes that constitute these centers of political, economic, and cultural power.

In this essay, I have two objectives. First, I seek to connect contributions to urban history published in *The Americas* to larger historiographical developments in Latin American history and urban studies. By a rough estimate, over 100 articles in *The Americas* have engaged with urban history over the journal’s 80-year lifespan. Urban history is more than history that takes the city as its backdrop; urban history always assigns a central role for the city’s inhabitants and the spaces they create and occupy.⁵ The articles chosen for this essay demonstrate this capacity of urban history: emphasizing cities as sites of historical continuity and change, overlapping yet distinct from overarching national and regional histories.

The second objective of this essay is to present thematic clusters of research articles useful to scholars and instructors looking for ways to build urban history syllabi. Through the six thematic headings below grouping 44 articles, I seek to emphasize broader patterns

4. Jocelyn Olcott, *International Women’s Year: The Greatest Consciousness-Raising Event in History* (Oxford University Press, 2017).

5. Brodwyn Fischer, “Urban History,” Oxford Bibliographies, August 26, 2013, <https://doi.org/10.1093/obo/9780199766581-0114>.

that speak to specific concerns in Latin American urban history (colonial rule, the significance of urban popular culture) as well as global urban history (patterns of reform and revolt, changes in economic and material life). While the selection of headings and the articles is ultimately subjective and overlaps exist between categories, the thematic clusters organized here seek to provide a series of articles that both draw from broader historiographical trends and provide potential pairings with similar themes manifested in other cities outside of Latin America.

Within the wider historiography of urban Latin America, the major colonial and latter-day national capitals of Spanish and Portuguese America dominate: Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Lima, and Rio de Janeiro. In addition to their preeminence in shaping wider territories and urban networks, these capitals often host national archival collections and libraries.⁶ Subsequently, scholars researching from the vantage point of these institutions often become drawn to the sprawling modern city around them, turning their research focus toward the urban. The articles I have selected for this collection are subjective as well, but where possible I've tried to emphasize scholarship on second cities, precocious towns, and ascendant regional hubs in the hopes of sparking interest in cities outside the ones listed above—though inevitably examples from these important cities will be included as well.

THEMATIC CLUSTERS

Urbanization and city-making

The vast majority of Latin America, as in most of the world, remained overwhelmingly rural until the twentieth century. City-making and urban development, however, played an important role in Iberian colonialism. This was due in part to the role Pre-Columbian urban centers and hierarchies played in the core regions of Spanish America, but also because European city builders sought opportunities to make cities into “symbols of imperium,” free of constraints put in place by urban development over centuries in Europe.⁷ The colonial city was thus an official center of socioeconomic, military, and cultural power as well as a projection of an ordered society under imperial rule. These dense settlements drew from broad Iberian understandings of sedentary civilization, which often melded with pre-existing Amerindian conceptions of city-states. Urban authorities directed efforts to build and shape colonial cities' form and function, while diverse urban denizens engaged in the collaborative and contested processes of city-making: creating spaces and social ties that both rooted them in the city and differentiated their ways of life from those outside of it. City-making thus resembles

6. Rio de Janeiro was the political capital of Brazil from 1763 until 1960, and still hosts the Arquivo Nacional.

7. Richard M Morse, “Some Characteristics of Latin American Urban History,” *American Historical Review* 67, no. 2 (1962): 318.

urbanization in the way it shapes the form and function of the city, though it is dictated by forces outside of the official ordinances of urban authority.

While early urban historiography debated the origins of the Spanish-American urban layout, by the 1950s and 1960s, Anglophone historians had begun to explore social and institutional developments of colonial cities in addition to their physical form. In this respect, two articles by Frederick Pike mark the first sustained contribution to urban history in *The Americas*, demonstrating how the Spanish American *cabildo* operated *vis-à-vis* the Catholic Church and the Habsburg monarchy to maintain colonial order and provide for social welfare through public works.⁸ Drawing almost exclusively from the *Actas de Cabildo* from multiple colonial cities and towns, these articles demonstrate the role of urban authority in sustaining the colonial order while at the same time rationalizing the frictions and inefficiencies that other historians detected (and in Pike's analysis, overestimated) in colonial urban governance.

T. Lynn Smith's paper "The Changing Function of Latin American Cities" brought another comparative urban analysis to the pages of the journal a decade later. Smith contrasts the stalled development of Spanish- and Portuguese-American colonial cities with the diversification of urban functions within the first century and a half after independence.⁹ Despite a negative appraisal of colonial administration, Smith delineates manufacturing, transportation, commerce, and communications as functions that eventually proliferated in the national period after 1825. In many ways, Smith's effort to understand comparative urban development in Latin America reflects prevailing paradigms of modernization and development in the late 1960s as much as it does the trajectories of Latin American cities. Regardless of the conclusions, the emergence of new functions of cities within larger colonial and national networks allows for a dynamic understanding of how and when cities transformed.

Several articles published in the 1970s offer case studies of long-term urban development for diverse Latin American cities outside of first-order viceregal seats and national capitals. On one hand, Joseph Eichandler and Thomas O'Brien analyzed the early prospects of Santiago de Chile in the sixteenth century as a case of "urban stagnation" due to "the paralyzing grip" of *encomenderos* on the *cabildo*, negatively impacting prosperity for artisan and merchant groups.¹⁰ Michael Conniff, on the other hand, offered a

8. Fredrick B. Pike, "Public Work and Social Welfare in Colonial Spanish American Towns," *Americas* 13, no. 4 (April 1957): 361–375, <https://doi.org/10.2307/979441>; Fredrick B. Pike, "The Municipality and the System of Checks and Balances in Spanish American Colonial Administration," *Americas* 15, no. 2 (October 1958): 139–158, <https://doi.org/10.2307/979549>.

9. T. Lynn Smith, "The Changing Functions of Latin American Cities," *Americas* 25, no. 1 (July 1968): 70–83, <https://doi.org/10.2307/980098>.

10. Joseph B. Eichandler and Thomas F. O'Brien, "Santiago Chile, 1541–1581: A Case Study of Urban Stagnation," *Americas* 33, no. 2 (October 1976): 205–225, <https://doi.org/10.2307/980784>.

long-term analysis of the port of Guayaquil through independence, arguing for its emergence as a highly autonomous merchant society, driven by cacao and contraband and characterized by the weaker influence of *encomenderos* (in contrast to Santiago).¹¹ Finally, Donald Ramos contributed a portrait of Vila Rica (modern Ouro Preto) as a rising colonial mining center in one of the most urbanized regions of Portuguese America.¹² While the pieces on Santiago and Guayaquil attend to questions of population and social class, Ramos provides a detailed examination of Vila Rica's rise and decline through early-nineteenth-century census data, showing how the relative fortunes of mining and slavery elevated the city from frontier status to political capital. All of these articles offered instances of relatively junior scholars (at the time) offering broad interpretations of the ways economic and political interests shaped long-term development as well as broader urban networks.

Urban development extends as well to questions of national industrialization. Previewing the arguments to be made in his monograph on the subject, Marshall Eakin studied the emergence of Belo Horizonte, one of several notable twentieth-century planned cities in Brazil, as an industrial pole.¹³ Politicians and technocrats at the dawn of Brazil's First Republic nurtured the creation of Belo Horizonte as a planned city with a broad industrial base, strengthened during the twentieth century by national- and state-level policies, with local politicians using the new state capital as an engine to transform the economy of Minas Gerais not just to mine minerals but also to process them into iron and steel. Similar explorations of the origins of industrialization in northern Mexico appear in an earlier article investigating the impact of early-twentieth-century industrialization in the city of Monterrey.¹⁴ Guillermo Beato and Domenico Sindico argue that Monterrey was at the center of one of the few regions in Latin America defying the "commonly accepted idea of dependent development" prior to 1929. Monterrey's prominence grew in light of the wider region's integration into British and North American markets. Monterrey's industrial transformation had much to do with the border shifts of the late nineteenth century, creating a new economic space in the shadow of North Atlantic development. State support for this borderlands town as well as corporate legislation spurred the concentration of workers and foundries as well as wealth into the hands of a few family firms. The two cases reflect debates on incipient industrialization as it relates to urban "industrial poles" in Latin America, whether consciously created for national modernization or attempting to harness international markets.

Two different approaches to urban space and historical demography account for interests in the ways that residential patterns have made up Latin American capitals in distinct

11. Michael L. Conniff, "Guayaquil through Independence: Urban Development in a Colonial System," *Americas* 33, no. 3 (January 1977): 385–410, <https://doi.org/10.2307/980945>.

12. Donald Ramos, "Vila Rica: Profile of a Colonial Brazilian Urban Center," *Americas* 35, no. 4 (April 1979): 495–526, <https://doi.org/10.2307/981020>.

13. Marshall C. Eakin, "Creating a Growth Pole: The Industrialization of Belo Horizonte, Brazil, 1897–1987," *Americas* 47, no. 4 (April 1991): 383–410, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1006683>.

14. Guillermo Beato and Domenico Sindico, "The Beginning of Industrialization in Northeast Mexico," *Americas* 39, no. 4 (April 1983): 499–518, <https://doi.org/10.2307/981250>.

moments. Susan Kellogg's study of indigenous households in Mexico City before and after the Spanish invasion uses historical demography to calculate population size "from the bottom up," focusing on family size and structure reconstructed through sixteenth-century legal suits.¹⁵ Kellogg builds a critique of the aggregate approach to pre- and early colonial population estimates, ultimately arguing that precolonial Aztec capital should be understood as a "large, highly urbanized population" rather than "basically a large agricultural settlement."¹⁶ In a distinct but related analysis for a wholly different time and place, James Baer traces the emergence of community networks in late-nineteenth-century Buenos Aires using the 1895 manuscript census.¹⁷ Baer combines concepts such as the block (*cuadra*) with statistics derived from the census to understand the origins of tenant empowerment in Argentina's capital. The way that families and neighborhoods staked their claims to cities in distinct eras (and the way that colonial- and national-era historians approached their study) show the importance of bottom-up approaches to city-making through archival documents.

City-making thus consisted of more than physical structures and gridiron layouts; it also consisted of paths of urban development, which shaped cities and their populations. T. Lynn Smith's evaluation of the colonial city notwithstanding, the patterns and networks created through city-making established the grounds upon which subsequent efforts to govern the city took place throughout the hemisphere. Ida Altman's 2017 contribution on port towns in the Spanish Caribbean demonstrates the continued relevance of urban networks for understanding the emerging sixteenth-century Atlantic system.¹⁸ Early port cities were precarious, "growing, shrinking, acquiring new names, or even disappearing," but a core network of ports in Cuba, Puerto Rico, and Hispaniola provided a "launching ground" for incursions into the mainland of the greater Caribbean.¹⁹ The physical construction and municipal institutionalization of these seaward-facing towns provided the draft plans for colonial expansion onto the mainland. In the early Spanish Caribbean, we see the origins of city-making and urban governance that eventually became the *Actas de Cabildo* across Spain's empire.

Urban Governance, Health, and Reform

Questions of urban governance and reform, particularly in the areas of crime and public health, emerge frequently in the pages of *The Americas*—unsurprising given the almost exclusive focus of cities on governance and administration in the first three centuries of

15. Susan Kellogg, "Households in Late Prehispanic and Early Colonial Mexico City: Their Structure and Its Implications for the Study of Historical Demography," *Americas* 44, no. 4 (April 1988): 483–494, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1006971>.

16. Kellogg, "Households," 493.

17. James A. Baer, "Street, Block, and Neighborhood: Residency Patterns, Community Networks, and the 1895 Argentine Manuscript Census," *Americas* 51, no. 1 (July 1994): 89–101, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1008357>.

18. Ida Altman, "Key to the Indies: Port Towns in the Spanish Caribbean: 1493–1550," *Americas* 74, no. 1 (January 2017): 5–26, <https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2016.79>.

19. Altman, "Key to the Indies," 6, 13.

colonial rule.²⁰ Public authorities and private institutions such as the Church sought ways to address poverty and illness within densely settled and socially stratified cities. Periods of national reform and social revolution spurred efforts to address urban issues. Charles Berry's 1970 article on reform efforts in the Central District of Oaxaca (amidst the larger Reforma era from 1854 to 1876) demonstrates the significance of the specific local context of the state capital. The struggle between Liberal legislators and an entrenched Church centered on urban real estate, the principal bastion of the latter's wealth in mid-nineteenth-century Oaxaca.²¹ Berry's interpretation of the course of Liberal reform in the Central District as it related to formerly corporate-held property both indigenous and ecclesiastical cut against prevailing generalized negative appraisals that assumed forced dispossession and corrupt speculation.

Liberal reformers in the nineteenth century throughout Latin America also drew from global intellectual currents to address specific urban issues, namely crime and disease. Two articles focusing on Buenos Aires speak to the significance of these subjects in an era of urban growth brought about by industrialization, immigration, and economic transformation.²² The "science of crime" as espoused by criminologists found one of its laboratories in cities such as Buenos Aires and, as Lila Caimari observes in her 1997 article on female convicts, another battleground between Church and State institutions.²³ Studying the incarcerated female population provides not only a glimpse into gendered approaches to criminal rehabilitation but also a cross-section of female lives, occupations, and criminality in a changing metropolis. Likewise, Vera Reber's study of tuberculosis patients and their families in nineteenth-century Buenos Aires provides insights into the disparities of urban life and government efforts to control contagion—policies that "poor and working people . . . endured," stressing "moral improvement and proper hygiene as the cure to tuberculosis."²⁴ City ordinances in the first decade of the twentieth century stressing prevention reshaped domestic and work spaces and reform hygiene habits, while patients and their families sought to navigate the agony of a disease associated with poverty. As the urban environment transformed in cities such as Buenos Aires, urban denizens' understandings of the city and the forces that shaped it changed as well.

20. Smith, "The Changing Functions of Latin American Cities," 83.

21. Charles R. Berry, "The Fiction and Fact of the Reform: The Case of the Central District of Oaxaca, 1856–1867," *Americas* 26, no. 3 (January 1970): 278–279, <https://doi.org/10.2307/980078>.

22. On this particular period of urbanization (covered by an influential historian of Buenos Aires), see James R. Scobie, "The Growth of Latin American Cities, 1870–1930," in *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume 4: C.1870 to 1930*, ed. Leslie Bethell, vol. 4, *The Cambridge History of Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 233–266, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521232258.008>.

23. Lila M. Caimari, "Whose Criminals Are These? Church, State, and Patronatos and the Rehabilitation of Female Convicts (Buenos Aires, 1890–1940)," *Americas* 54, no. 2 (October 1997): 185–208, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1007741>. The historiography of urban crime and policing in Latin America's major cities may be further explored in the works of Pablo Piccato (Mexico City), Carlos Aguirre (Lima), Thomas Holloway (Rio de Janeiro), and Boris Fausto (São Paulo).

24. Vera Blinn Reber, "Misery, Pain and Death: Tuberculosis in Nineteenth Century Buenos Aires," *Americas* 56, no. 4 (April 2000): 498, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003161500029825>.

Governance also extended to the administration of taxation and the construction of public works. Public works (or modern infrastructure) has much to do with city-making, but public finance and its attendant institutions speak to efforts to address social and economic development, as well as shape urban inequalities.²⁵ James Riley's article on the politics of taxation in late colonial Tlaxcala (New Spain) provides a case study of how taxation and civic pride across class and ethnic lines created opportunities to modernize the city's public works, particularly around urgent questions of water supply and flood control. Relations between Spanish *vecinos* (urban citizens) and indigenous communities demonstrate how urban residents sought improvements, in this case independently from Bourbon reform efforts of the late eighteenth century.²⁶ Michael K. Bess's recent article on traffic and mobility in Mexico City principally during the Porfiriato provides another perspective on urban governance through transit policy.²⁷ Questions around traffic congestion and public transportation reform pitted wealthy residents and foreign interests against poor and working-class neighborhoods, with repercussions for municipal governance. Both articles usefully adapt a scope belonging to public officials to engage the broader urban population, attendant to the specific historical context and differentiated power between different social groups.

The last article in this cluster from the last two decades shows more recent approaches to national governance and its intersection with urban improvement and national identity. Eric Zolov's exploration of efforts to showcase Mexico through the 1968 Olympic Games, using advertising as well as public expenditure to contest visions of the country as underdeveloped. The overshadowing of the 1968 Olympics by the Tlatelolco Massacre hides the ways that the institutionalized revolution used the city as a launch pad for a modern vision of the country for the consumption of foreign tourism. Mexico as presented in publicity was a modern peacemaker among nations but also a haven of authentic folklore.²⁸ Foreign encounters with Latin American cityscapes have informed urban governance efforts as much as they have shaped official efforts to showcase both city and nation.²⁹ Tourism, international sporting events, and "expatriate" communities (from World War I "slackers" to today's digital nomads) remain possible subjects of study for future research into how urban governance responds to international currents.³⁰

25. For a recent study of public finance and its long-term impact on urban development, see Anne G Hanley, *The Public Good and the Brazilian State: Municipal Finance and Public Services in São Paulo, 1822-1930* (University of Chicago Press, 2018).

26. James D. Riley, "Public Works and Local Elites: The Politics of Taxation in Tlaxcala, 1780-1810," *Americas* 58, no. 3 (January 2002): 355-393, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2002.0020>.

27. Michael K. Bess, "Traffic Problems: Authority, Mobility, and Technology in Mexico's Federal District, 1867-1912," *Americas* 78, no. 2 (April 2021): 259-278, <https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2020.108>.

28. Eric Zolov, "Showcasing the 'Land of Tomorrow': Mexico and the 1968 Olympics," *Americas* 61, no. 2 (October 2004): 159-188, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2004.0195>.

29. For a discussion of the intersection of urban history and the construction of Mexican "tropes," see Mauricio Tenorio, *"I Speak of the City": Mexico City at the Turn of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), especially for discussion of Mexico City as the "Brown Atlantis" (pp. 147-167).

30. For more on US slackers in Mexico during WWI, see Dan La Botz, "American 'Slackers' in the Mexican Revolution: International Proletarian Politics in the Midst of a National Revolution," *Americas* 62, no. 4 (April 2006): 563-590, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2006.0081>, and Tenorio, *"I Speak of the City"*.

Urban Politics and Protest

Cities have long held a reputation for political ferment and contestation, even as they have sought to be the base of regional and national political power. From colonial riots to modern *cacerolazos* (pot-and-pan protests), the urban landscape provides myriad opportunities for urban residents to contest power, as well as seek accommodation. Labor politics naturally inclines toward the urban sphere, where industrial factories, radical immigrants, and stark inequalities have historically conglomerated.³¹ In two separate articles on Porfirian-era labor politics, John M. Hart and David W. Walker located precursors to labor and working-class organization in Mexico City.³² Hart traces the anarchist movement emanating from industrializing Mexico City during La Reforma and early Porfirian era, while Walker focuses on working class organizations within Porfirian Mexico City. Anarchist organizations responded to long work hours, low pay, and execrable living conditions with mobilizations, generating crackdowns on the part of the state. The Díaz government, according to Walker, also worked to blunt the impact of urban labor mobilization, establishing policies and patterns that shaped labor militancy into the twentieth century. Attention to radical newspapers and congresses detail the role of urban artisans in particular in shaping these relationships.

Anton Rosenthal's article on streetcar workers and labor strikes in Uruguay begins from the perspective of anarchist-led general strikes that shook South American cities in the early twentieth century. His analysis, however, focuses on street-level strategies, particularly how public transportation workers utilized the trolley and streetcar system to mobilize artisans and laborers for better working conditions and pay. What stands out in Rosenthal's piece is the attention to streetcar workers' role in both the "social and physical structure" of Montevideo, particularly their knowledge of public transportation (and the dangers it presented to pedestrian and worker alike) as well as their dispersal throughout the city.³³ The extent to which the articles in this cluster are urban history or merely social (or labor) history "in an urban context" is debatable, but Rosenthal's focus on the role of physical mobility in the Montevideo strike along with the emergence of the streetcar as a symbol of urban protest following the strike suggest an emerging integrated approach to urban and labor history.³⁴

31. Michael M. Hall and Hobart A. Spalding, "The Urban Working Class and Early Latin American Labour Movements, 1880–1930," in *The Cambridge History of Latin America: Volume 4: C.1870 to 1930*, ed. Leslie Bethell, vol. 4, *The Cambridge History of Latin America* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 325–66, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CHOL9780521232258.010>.

32. John M. Hart, "Nineteenth Century Urban Labor Precursors of the Mexican Revolution: The Development of an Ideology," *Americas* 30, no. 3 (January 1974): 297–318, <https://doi.org/10.2307/980359>; David W. Walker, "Porfirian Labor Politics: Working Class Organizations in Mexico City and Porfirio Diaz, 1876–1902," *Americas* 37, no. 3 (January 1981): 257–289, <https://doi.org/10.2307/980703>.

33. Anton Rosenthal, "Streetcar Workers and the Transformation of Montevideo: The General Strike of May 1911," *Americas* 51, no. 4 (April 1995): 492, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1007677>.

34. Diego Armus and John Lear, "The Trajectory of Latin American Urban History," *Journal of Urban History* 24, no. 3 (March 1998): 291–301, <https://doi.org/10.1177/009614429802400301>. Armus and Lear discuss the trend of combining empirical data with themes unique to urban experience while also critiquing urban history in which the city is mere "social context."

Labor politics in Lima, also around the turn of the twentieth century, offers a contrast as well to focuses on urban labor radicalism, in part because of Peru's differentiated experience in regard to industrialization. Iñigo Bryce-García, in an article contributing to studies of nineteenth-century urban labor politics, finds that the mutual aid societies offered a way for artisans to stake a claim to an emerging liberal order. Artisans in this way were less the vanguard of radical labor movements and more a distinguished set above the *plebe* at the bottom of Lima's social order. Voluntary associations such as artisan fire brigades demonstrated the integration of workers' organizations into urban life.³⁵ Paulo Drinot's article on *restaurantes populares* in 1930s Lima argues that state-sponsored restaurants provided the *limeño* working class with new spaces for socialization as well as sustenance, an alternative to eateries run by Asian immigrants but also a space separate from the factory or the union hall to develop a working-class identity. The comparison of state-supported *restaurantes*, Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA)-affiliated *comedores*, and Chinese-owned *chifas* speaks to a culinary landscape catering to the urban workers while contributing to class formation, mediated but hardly directed by the state.³⁶ Though Peru never produced a classic populist project on the level of Brazil or Argentina, studying popular politics at the lunch counter shows that similar complex negotiations took place between the state and workers in its capital cities.

Among the most original articles on popular urban politics published in *The Americas* is Aldo Lauria-Santiago's 2011 research on popular politics in nineteenth-century San Miguel (El Salvador)—a strong contrast with the primary focus of urban historians on capital cities. In addition to focusing on provincial cities as sites of importance, it is one of the only articles to focus on Central America in any capacity. The gap is not just regional; for Lauria-Santiago, between colonial and independence-era revolts and labor struggles in industrializing cities, "there lies a vast and perhaps more relevant arena in which small cities interacted with rural villages," one which has the potential to reveal a species of urban politics of great significance in the "decentralized and contested politics" of nineteenth-century Latin America.³⁷ Lauria-Santiago shows how San Miguel served as "the site of alliance-building" and mobilization among and between rural and urban groups, as well as "the site at which the national constituted itself in relation to the local and regional."³⁸ The significance of the 1875 uprising studied in the article suggests that other provincial centers present similar dynamics that need to be understood in terms of the demands of local artisans, market vendors, and laborers.

More recent approaches to popular politics and protest in cities, however, have gone beyond labor unrest to emphasize neighborhood and other group associations' links to

35. Iñigo García-Bryce, "Politics by Peaceful Means: Artisan Mutual Aid Societies in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Lima, 1860-1879," *Americas* 59, no. 3 (January 2003): 325-345, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2003.0010>.

36. Paulo Drinot, "Food, Race and Working-Class Identity: *Restaurantes Populares* and Populism in 1930s Peru," *Americas* 62, no. 2 (October 2005): 245-270, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2005.0160>.

37. Aldo A. Lauria-Santiago, "Holding the City Hostage: Popular Sectors and Elites in San Miguel, El Salvador, 1875," *Americas* 68, no. 1 (July 2011): 63, 64, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2011.0102>.

38. Lauria-Santiago, "Holding the City Hostage," 66.

twentieth-century urban political life. James Baer's 1993 article focuses on working-class protest in early-twentieth-century Buenos Aires but primarily through a focus on neighborhoods and housing. Tenant organization allowed for different types of leaders, particularly women, to emerge outside of working class organizations such as unions—though these organizations often complemented tenant networks.³⁹ The specific conditions and costs of *conventillos* spoke to changing urban conditions and opportunities to organize urban protests. David Yee's article from 2021 on political mobilization for land rights in Ciudad Netzahualcoyotl does more than shift focus to the urban periphery of Mexico City; it also adopts an archives-based perspective on classic urban questions such as informality, marginality, and neighborhood associations previously explored primarily by ethnographers and sociologists.⁴⁰ By emphasizing the significance of politicians siding with Ciudad Neza residents over urban land barons, Yee's article encapsulates new approaches to understanding the impact of mobilizations on affecting reforms at the urban grassroots level.

Urban Economic and Material Life

Urban protests often sought broader political participation as well as better material conditions, and understanding social unrest requires an understanding of economic life. Research into urban economic and material life published in *The Americas* focuses on large colonial and national capitals, with an emphasis on classic colonial economic activities such as textile production. Comparatively few articles, however, address questions of production, commerce, and consumption and how economic activity and material culture shaped life in Latin American cities. Nevertheless, articles represented in this cluster particularly from the past two decades provide insight into how research in this area might expand.

Native industry, producing for domestic markets and relying on indigenous labor, was concentrated in cities by the late sixteenth century, growing in number through the late eighteenth century. Richard Greenleaf's 1967 overview of the *obraje* (colonial textile factory) in New Spain emphasizes the concentration of this institution in the major urban centers of the viceroyalty, emphasizing its role in mediating official stances surrounding indigenous labor and tribute. Two-thirds of the nearly 700 looms of New Spain could be found in the cities of México and Querétaro, with the latter providing uniforms to newly raised colonial militias in the mid-eighteenth century.⁴¹ Greenleaf's accounts of relations between officials, workshop owners, and indigenous laborers indirectly reveals the urban

39. James A. Baer, "Tenant Mobilization and the 1907 Rent Strike in Buenos Aires," *Americas* 49, no. 3 (January 1993): 343–368, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1007030>.

40. David Yee, "Shantytown Mexico: The Democratic Opening in Ciudad Nezahualcōyotl, 1969–1976," *Americas* 78, no. 1 (January 2021): 119–147, <https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2020.2>. This article follows a broader trend exploring the relationship between formal and informal Latin American cities, explored further in Brodwyn M. Fischer et al., *Cities from Scratch: Poverty and Informality in Urban Latin America* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

41. Richard E. Greenleaf, "The *Obraje* in the Late Mexican Colony," *Americas* 23, no. 3 (January 1967): 236, <https://doi.org/10.2307/980468>.

fabric of economic life in a sector that “had become [a] capitalistic enterprise in an essentially mercantile environment.”⁴² Handicraft manufacture beyond textiles in Christina Borchart Moreno’s 1995 study of late colonial Quito gives a fuller scope of the urban export economy within the northern colonial Andes, as well as the emergent chains of production and flows of goods that linked the city of Quito to the wider economic space. Handicraft production also apparently shaped rural-to-urban migration, with craftsmen seeking to avoid *mita* (indigenous labor draft) obligations to fill artisan roles in the capital of the Audiencia.⁴³ Tracing movements such as these reveals the economic and social churn of the eighteenth century and the role of cities in orienting regional-level changes in the era of Bourbon reformism.

Market life and urban consumption within Latin American cities has provided an important source for understanding social dynamics in different periods. From Mexico City to Potosí, indigenous women and men dominated key commodities essential to daily urban life.⁴⁴ In John E. Kizca’s 1980 article exploring the late colonial *pulque* trade of Mexico City, the presence of Spanish ownership within the pulque sector speaks not just to preexisting “traditional” pulque producers that competed with *españoles* but also to a growing indigenous and *casta* (mixed-race) consumer market. While other authors have traced the social history of drinking and violence in Mexico City, Kizca’s article also reveals colonial authorities’ often-stymied efforts to establish regulations and oversight of this alcoholic beverage and the *pulquerías* that received daily imports of this product with a short shelf life. The focus on these locations, where urban workers blew off steam (sometimes leading to drunken violence) reveals how enterprises that flaunted official control were tightly intertwined with urban life in New Spain’s capital. In the same issue as Kizca’s article, Lyman Johnson’s study of the bakers of Buenos Aires at the turn of the nineteenth century reveals another side of urban economic life in a wholly different context. Johnson’s focus on bakers and the bread trade at a turning point in the city’s history contains elements of urban protest but also of the structure of a key industry, one that shifted from artisanal to large-scale production during this time and survived and thrived economic change wrought by British imports after 1809.⁴⁵

In the case of Quito and Buenos Aires, immigrants—both regional and international—played important roles in the economic life of their respective cities, contributing not just in terms of shaping urban culture and ethnicity but also in economic activity. Rosana

42. Greenleaf, “The *Obraje*” 250. A recent work that places *obraje* production in context of early-modern global capitalism is John Tutino, *Making a New World: Founding Capitalism in the Bajío and Spanish North America* (Duke University Press, 2011), ch. 6.

43. Christiana Borchart de Moreno, “Beyond the *Obraje*: Handicraft Production in Quito toward the End of the Colonial Period,” *Americas* 52, no. 1 (July 1995): 14, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1008082>.

44. An exemplary study in this regard is Jane Mangan, *Trading Roles: Gender, Ethnicity and the Urban Economy in Colonial Potosí* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

45. Lyman L. Johnson, “The Entrepreneurial Reorganization of an Artisan Trade: The Bakers of Buenos Aires, 1770–1820,” *Americas* 37, no. 2 (October 1980): 143, <https://doi.org/10.2307/981058>. This article and other contemporaneous publications previewed Johnson’s overall vision presented in Lyman Johnson, *Workshop of Revolution: Buenos Aires and the Atlantic World, 1776–1810* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

Barbosa Nunes finds in an article published in 2000 that Portuguese immigrants, particularly young males, played an important role in the retail sector of the new seat of the Portuguese court (and, later, Brazilian empire) much earlier than previously recognized. The arrival of the Portuguese court brought population growth and economic opportunities, fueled in part by the rise of the coffee export economy. Portuguese migrants filled an important gap in the commercial sector, owing to the fact that, between enslavers and enslaved, there was a limited pool of city residents to fill “middle status occupations and work as clerks, commercial agents, shopkeepers, retailers, tavern owners, slave traders, and merchants.”⁴⁶ Early national-era migration shaped Atlantic ports such as Rio de Janeiro at key moments of economic change, change that often drew upon the upswell of European immigration.⁴⁷

Indeed, a focus on “middle groups” reflects a historiographical reconsideration of the middle class in Latin American history, not just in economic history but in regional approaches to twentieth-century political history.⁴⁸ Often understood as urban, new approaches to these middle-class groups and the material ways in which they affirmed and expressed their class identity mark this subfield. Recent articles in *The Americas* indicate that there is much to study regarding middle groups even before the birth of Latin American nation-states. Marie Francois takes up the thread of pawning in independence-era Mexico City to provide insight into urban material life particularly of the urban, multiethnic middle-class households, a small group precariously situated between the wealthy and urban poor. The widespread pawning particularly of cloth and silver by wives, widows, and single women representing these households demonstrates for Francois that these goods had value beyond their use and status for these middling families, providing access to credit and collateral and delaying slipping down the social hierarchy.⁴⁹ Continuing in this vein while questioning binaries between elite and popular groups, Andrew Konove has looked back at the eighteenth-century shadow economy in Mexico City by considering the role that the *baratillo* market (secondhand market, also known as the “thieves market”) played in urban life.⁵⁰ Here, “middle sectors” or “intermediate rungs,” play a significant role in Konove’s interpretation of this shadow economy’s resilience. As a privileged site of middle-class life, urban history in all time periods provides a powerful way to consider the material and cultural constitution of the

46. Rosana Barbosa Nunes, “Portuguese Migration to Rio de Janeiro, 1822-1850,” *Americas* 57, no. 1 (July 2000): 50–51, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003161500030200>.

47. See, for example, José Moya, *Cousins and Strangers: Spanish Immigrants in Buenos Aires, 1850–1930* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

48. D. S. Parker and Louise E. Walker, *Latin America’s Middle Class: Unsettled Debates and New Histories* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2013); Louise E. Walker, *Waking from the Dream: Mexico’s Middle Classes After 1968* (Stanford University Press, 2013); Barbara Weinstein, *The Color of Modernity: Sao Paulo and the Making of Race and Nation in Brazil* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015); A. Ricardo Lopez-Pedrerros, *Makers of Democracy: A Transnational History of the Middle Classes in Colombia* (Duke University Press, 2019). These recent works, unlike the articles mentioned in this paragraph, focus exclusively on the twentieth century.

49. Marie Francois, “Cloth and Silver: Pawning and Material Life in Mexico City at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century,” *Americas* 60, no. 3 (January 2004): 325–362, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2004.0011>.

50. Andrew Konove, “On the Cheap: The Baratillo Marketplace and the Shadow Economy of Eighteenth-Century Mexico City,” *Americas* 72, no. 2 (April 2015): 249–278, <https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2015.3>.

middle classes, particularly those that sought to claim some form of urban modernity through the things they bought and consumed.⁵¹

Urban Culture and Power

By far the most capacious category within the subfield, the study of Latin American urban culture has an extensive lineage.⁵² While the earliest articles with an urban culture focus in *The Americas* addressed Church institutions (particularly schools and hospitals) and religious culture, more recent turns toward popular culture, secular as well as religious, allow for considerations of how sports, music, art, and education show how city dwellers sought to establish their place in the life of the city. Studies of elite urban culture and power in the 1970s and 1980s contributed to the construction of the city “as both beacon and leviathan, whose very stratification helped breed poetry and a progressive political public sphere.”⁵³ More recent research has sought to uncover how popular culture contributed to both poetry and other cultural forms as well as the public sphere.

Susan Socolow’s 1978 article on religiosity among merchants in pre-independence Buenos Aires provides a classic example of a systematic study of religious culture and social power. The relationship between Church, state, and merchants manifested through the city’s religious calendar, reflecting masses, *Te Deums*, and celebrations but also the associative ties made through religious organizations the *porteño* merchant class.⁵⁴ Since then, articles have emphasized different dimensions to spiritual life and religious culture. A 1996 special issue exploring the seventeenth-century civic celebration known as the *Entrada Angelopolitana* (the viceregal entry into the *novohispano* city of Puebla de los Ángeles) provides insights into colonial urban culture in Puebla. Nancy H. Fee’s consideration of this civic–religious spectacle predates by centuries the symbolism of Olympian Mexico City, yet at the same time conveys the theatre and ritual of colonial power. The organization of the spectacle and its financing show the operation of local power as well in its efforts to present itself on the level of the viceregal capital.⁵⁵ The trappings of Catholic religiosity went hand in hand with elite urban power in the colonial period, with particular manifestations during periods of civic commemoration.

51. See Arnold J. Bauer, *Goods, Power, History: Latin America’s Material Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 2001), esp. ch. 5, which emphasizes the relationship between rising national middle classes and modernizing goods.

52. Richard M. Morse, *From Community to Metropolis: A Biography of São Paulo, Brazil* (New York: Octagon Books, 1974); José Luis Romero, *Latinoamérica, las ciudades y las ideas* (Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 2001); Ángel Rama, *The Lettered City* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996).

53. Ernesto Capello, “Public Spheres, *Crónicas*, and Heterogeneous Landscapes: New Works in Latin American Urban History,” *Latin American Research Review* 43, no. 2 (2008): 252, <https://doi.org/10.1353/lar.0.0009>.

54. Susan M. Socolow, “Religious Participation of the Porteño Merchants: 1778-1810,” *Americas* 32, no. 3 (January 1976): 372–401, <https://doi.org/10.2307/980160>.

55. Nancy H. Fee, “*La Entrada Angelopolitana*: Ritual and Myth in the Viceregal Entry in Puebla de Los Angeles,” *Americas* 52, no. 3 (January 1996): 283–320, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1008003>.

Regional urban culture can shape national identities as well, something revealed by Thomas Krüggler's investigation of *indigenista* and labor movements' perceived meanings of modernity in early-twentieth-century Cuzco. Krüggler notes how the remaking of Cuzco into a modern city informed questions about the place of Andean culture and indigenous people in the modern city and regional economy that middle-class *indigenista* university students envisioned. Master artisans and labor leaders sought recognition as middle-class citizens and refused to see working-class issues and the "Indian Question" as related; instead, they sought respectability through associations such as rifle clubs that brought them into contact with city leaders. Krüggler's piece shows how ethnicity mattered in the negotiation of urban modernity in a city that charted an ambivalent relationship between its Incan past and indigenous present.⁵⁶

Modernity takes on different meanings in other urban cultural contexts, as shown in Mariano Ben Plotkin's 1999 article on psychoanalysis in Buenos Aires.⁵⁷ An offshoot of Plotkin's research presented in *Freud on the Pampas*, the setting here is explicitly the city where popular publications filtered the meaning of Freudian psychoanalysis in an urban landscape not dissimilar to other South American cities where artists and intellectuals pondered the meaning of modernity (see, for example, the famous Modern Art Week of 1922 in São Paulo). The origins of the "psychoanalytic culture" that made Buenos Aires "the world center of psychoanalysis" emerged in print publications of the 1920s and, by the 1940s, was a part of the discourse of urban popular culture. While print publications buoyed these Freudian discourses, other media reproduced mass culture, particularly football in 1920s Buenos Aires. Matthew Karush's 2003 piece emphasizes the role of cinema, radio, and tabloid pages in promoting an Argentine national identity primarily through football.⁵⁸ The massification of football (previously the purview of British-affiliated schools and elites) was not simple top-down co-optation by the national state, with mass media allowing for different representations of football that could either affirm or contest social hierarchies, as understood in the nation's capital.

Research into urban popular culture continues to focus on major capital cities, with Mexico City continuing to be a focus of scholarly attention, though recently, global and transnational turns have shaped approaches. Ageeth Sluis puts the rise of the cultural phenomenon known as *Bataclanismo* center stage in a 2010 article, noting how new modes of dress, taste, and mere presence among postrevolutionary Mexico City women influenced by French dance and theater disrupted norms of gender, race, and femininity.⁵⁹ The presence of *bataclanes* represented more than just a fashionable cultural style; it aided

56. Thomas Krüggler, "Indians, Workers, and the Arrival of 'Modernity': Cuzco, Peru (1895-1924)," *Americas* 56, no. 2 (October 1999): 161-189, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1008111>.

57. Mariano Ben Plotkin, "Tell Me Your Dreams: Psychoanalysis and Popular Culture in Buenos Aires, 1930-1950," *Americas* 55, no. 4 (April 1999): 601-629, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1008323>.

58. Matthew B. Karush, "National Identity in the Sports Pages: Football and the Mass Media in 1920s Buenos Aires," *Americas* 60, no. 1 (July 2003): 11-32, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2003.0073>.

59. Ageeth Sluis, "BATACLANISMO! Or, How Female Deco Bodies Transformed Postrevolutionary Mexico City," *Americas* 66, no. 4 (April 2010): 469-499, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.0.0258>.

in bridging a gap between revolutionary *indigenismo* and *mestizaje*. Sluis notes that European theater trends reached all urban cants of the Americas, but the specific postrevolutionary context of Mexico City created a space for a reordering of gender norms and aesthetic standards. Popular theater plays a prominent part in Robert M. Buffington's exploration of Sinophobia in Mexico City in the years before and after the Mexican Revolution. Here, *zarzuelas* (musical theater pieces) and *calaveras* (tongue-in-cheek poetic eulogies) provide ways to understand how anti-Chinese sentiment manifested in everyday urban life, particularly through a derogatory phrase imitating Chinese speech.⁶⁰ Migration histories make up an important part of urban history, including in *The Americas*, and certainly these groups played significant roles where they established enduring communities.⁶¹ The Chinese immigrant presence was far lower in Mexico City than in the northern borderlands, a fact which casts popular construction of Chinese stereotypes in Mexico City as more of a reflection of cultural shifts happening among the urban masses. In these ways, research articles on urban culture offer reminders that the expansion of mass media materials, as well as urban consumption trends of that media, reveals much about how discourses of power operated within transnational as well as national fields.

Urban Letrados and Print Media

The final thematic cluster focuses on a significant element of urban culture: urban *letrados* and print culture. As suggested by Ángel Rama in *La ciudad letrada* (*The Lettered City*), the written word was a tool of colonial and national state power that emanated from cities particularly in Spanish America. As mass literacy expanded by the twentieth century, the written word took on new form in the broadened urban public sphere, no longer purely the arena for privileged *letrados*. Print culture, news media, and journalistic explorations of the city make up an important source base, thus making articles treating this aspect of urban culture of particular interest.

An introduction to the work of urban *letrados* in the colonial era may be found in Javier Malagón-Barceló's 1961 overview of the role of "men of the law" (his translation for *letrados*) in the colonizing efforts of the Spanish empire.⁶² Prefiguring the influential arguments of Ángel Rama, Malagón-Barceló argues for the role of law and writing in establishing the "new urban nucleus," beginning with official acts drawn up by scribes that accompanied expeditions. Malagón-Barceló asserts that, from these nuclei, "the

60. Robert M. Buffington, "Chin-Chun-Chan: Popular Sinophobia in Early Twentieth-Century Mexico City," *Americas* 78, no. 2 (April 2021): 279–318, <https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2020.105>.

61. For examples of articles treating urban immigrant communities, see Roberto Grün, "The Armenian Renaissance in Brazil," *Americas* 53, no. 1 (July 1996): 113–151, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1007476>; Mónica Almeida, "Phoenicians of the Pacific: Lebanese and Other Middle Easterners in Ecuador," *Americas* 53, no. 1 (July 1996): 87–111, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1007475>; and Kit McPhee, "Immigrants with Money are No Use to Us' Race and Ethnicity in the Zona Portuária of Rio de Janeiro, 1903–1912," *Americas* 62, no. 4 (April 2006): 623–650, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2006.0085>. Also, Nunes, "Portuguese Migration to Rio de Janeiro, 1822-1850" mentioned above.

62. Javier Malagón-Barceló, "The Role of the *Letrado* in the Colonization of America," *Americas* 18, no. 1 (July 1961): 1–17, <https://doi.org/10.2307/979749>.

Castilian jurist . . . had the power to make Utopian realities as no other had,” effectively delineating the norms, laws, and procedures by which the Spanish crown might rule.⁶³ In addition to tracing longstanding patterns of territorial and juridical organization created by the *letrados*, Malagón-Barceló also notes that indigenous subjects noticed quickly that power lay as much if not more so with those who wielded pens (jurists, judges, scribes, and *oidores*) as it did with those who wielded swords.⁶⁴ In this way, Malagón-Barceló lays out a compelling case for contemplating how *letrados* shaped the organizing nodes of Spanish imperialism.

While the influence of writers and the written word could be said to permeate all of the previous clusters, other articles stand out for their focus on the written and printed word in the Latin American city. Frank Salomon, an Andeanist anthropologist whose work has explored indigenous forms of literacy outside the “lettered city,” published an article in 1988 studying women’s written *testamentos* (testaments, or wills) in late-sixteenth/early-seventeenth-century Quito. These testaments provide a window into not just the presence of urban indigenous people in a colonial city but also how notarial documents served to shape ethnic identity, processes of acculturation, and “future lives” for their descendants.⁶⁵ In another urban colonial setting, Alejandro Cañeque’s 1996 article on the ritual punishment of heretics (the *auto de fe*) in Mexico City puts written descriptions and symbolic representations of the act at the center of his analysis. The composers of the textual *auto de fe* and written accounts (*relaciones*) constructed an official view of religious power unfolding in public spaces of the viceregal capital. The power of writing and representation takes on new meaning in the face of an empire seeking to legitimize its rule over an ethnically diverse and spiritually suspect majority. Cañeque’s assertion that writing the description is in fact “part of the ritual” offers a reminder that the process of textual composition in the colonial city meant as much as the ends such acts sought to achieve.⁶⁶

Writing as a tool of colonial power and resistance in cities has continued to be a subject of study, with Alcira Dueña’s 2012 article on indigenous *letrados* in Bourbon Lima consciously building upon Rama’s established definition of the lettered city to include “the texts and activism of members of the indigenous educated elites who appropriated writing and reformulated the language of law with alternative purposes.”⁶⁷ The social tensions and Andean revolts against the *reparto* and other abuses led to openings for literate native officials inhabiting the Cercado de Lima, the historical center of the city of Lima. The focus on the Cercado as an institutional space as well as indigenous *letrados*

63. Malagón-Barceló, “The Role of the *Letrado*,” 8.

64. Malagón-Barceló, “The Role of the *Letrado*,” 16.

65. Frank Salomon, “Indian Women of Early Colonial Quito as Seen through Their Testaments,” *Americas* 44, no. 3 (January 1988): 325–341, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1006910>. For more on Quito in this same period, see Kris Lane, *Quito 1599: City and Colony in Transition* (University of New Mexico Press, 2002).

66. Alejandro Cañeque, “Theater of Power: Writing and Representing the *Auto de Fe* in Colonial Mexico,” *Americas* 52, no. 3 (January 1996): 321–343, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1008004>.

67. Alcira Dueñas, “The Lima Indian *Letrados*: Remaking the República de Indios in the Bourbon Andes,” *Americas* 72, no. 1 (January 2015): 57, <https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2014.5>.

provides an alternate path to understanding multiple lettered cities. Efforts to restore the autonomy of the Habsburg-era *república de indios* emerged in Lima and found expression through the production of legal documents. Despite this expansion of the lettered city, *letrados* in the classic sense remained elites amidst the broader social milieu. Urban literacy, print media, and the journalistic press further contributed to the process of describing cities and, in the process, making their public spheres.

Newspapers and other print media have naturally proven to be rich sources for historians studying urban politics and culture, but several articles since 2012 demonstrate how newspapers and professional journalists expand the lettered cities of Latin America. Willie Hiatt studies the proliferation of tabloids and broadsheets in twentieth-century Cuzco to understand the production and consumption of news, particularly by indigenous publics in early-twentieth-century Cuzco.⁶⁸ Early journalists in Cuzco used their columns and reports to portray a replicable modernity in the Andean city. Indigenous *cusqueños* were often excluded from this vision of modernity; even (as Hiatt shows) individuals with indigenous surnames sought to make their voices heard in these newspapers, showing again that these groups recognized the significance of this medium. Journalism is the subject of Vanessa Freije's 2015 article on the life and death of Manuel Buendía, a Mexico City journalist who symbolizes efforts to create a critical antiauthoritarian public in the latter decades of Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) one-party rule.⁶⁹ Buendía's newspaper columns investigating official corruption, labor disputes, and murder cover-ups locate this critical tendency within the media landscape of post-1968 Mexico, one in which the urban middle class increasingly criticized the failings of the regime. Buendía's career, cut short by his assassination by a government official set to be implicated for drug trafficking, unfolds in Freije's recounting within the growing leviathan of Mexico City, showing how this backdrop provided the material with which Buendía and other critical journalists painted a critical picture of modern Mexico.

Conclusion

The articles above show the avenues and alleyways that contributors to *The Americas* have traversed in pursuit of the history of Latin America's cities. The myriad research articles published in its pages have overlapped with broader currents of research into the urban history of Latin America, spanning five centuries of rupture and continuity. Typically, articles have focused on the former: moments of transformation tracking with social transformation or revolutionary upheaval. Together with the vast urban historiography of Latin America, these articles help make sense of key moments and illustrative events.

68. Willie Hiatt, "Indians in the Lobby: Newspapers and the Limits of Andean Cosmopolitanism, 1896–1930," *Americas* 68, no. 3 (January 2012): 377–403, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2012.0006>.

69. Vanessa Freije, "Exposing Scandals, Guarding Secrets: Manuel Buendía, Columnismo, and the Unraveling of One-Party Rule in Mexico, 1965–1984," *Americas* 72, no. 3 (July 2015): 377–409, <https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2015.30>.

The thematic clusters developed here track with larger historiographical focuses in Latin American urban history, though they could also be connected to more global visions of urban history. One larger unifying trend in these articles could be the historic entrenchment of urban inequality across Latin America. In an essay reflecting on approaches to “indelible inequalities” in Latin America, urban sociologist Javier Auyero proposed that students and scholars of Latin America might usefully draw from an “Inequality Toolbox” to articulate “classificatory schemes . . . to organize (and abstract from) the ‘multiform, momentaneous, and unbearably precise world.’”⁷⁰ Imbalances of power and unequal distribution of material wealth arguably define all cities, hierarchical both in their organization and in their relation to other human communities. It is hoped that these articles from past volumes of *The Americas* can provide another set of tools to think about the way Latin American cities changed over time, and how they can provide reflection on the recently noted phenomenon of planetary urbanization as historical, with important antecedents dating back to the earliest Latin American cities.⁷¹

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70. Javier Auyero, “Afterword: Funes and the Toolbox of Inequality,” in *Indelible Inequalities in Latin America: Insights from History, Politics and Culture*, ed. Luis Reygadas and Paul Gootenberg (Duke University Press, 2010), 195, <https://doi.org/10.1515/9780822392903-010>. The quote within the citation is from “Funes el Memorioso” by Jorge Luis Borges.

71. For discussion of planetary urbanization in a Latin American context, see Adrián Lerner Patrón, “The Ruins of a Steel Mill: Planetary Urbanization in the Brazilian Amazon,” *Journal of Urban History* 50, no. 3 (May 1, 2024): 541–562, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00961442231209298>.

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