


Catholic activists experienced political transformations and radicalisations but not in predictable ways, so that their conversion from conservatism to radicalism did not occur in linear ways. Finally, scholars will find in *Love and Despair* an indispensable study of the Cold War in Latin America, for Pensado treats Catholicism (and religion, more generally) seriously, not simply as a reactionary or declining force. Despite the advance of secularism and the political radicalism that surfaced during the age of revolutionary upheaval of the 1960s, Catholicism remained intrinsically tied to Mexico's national life and thus inevitably shaped how Mexicans related with modernity.

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Claudia Brosseder, *Inka Bird Idiom: Amazonian Feathers in the Andes*

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Thanks to both the extant material record and efforts of scholars alike, the Inka are now synonymous with stone and camelid fibre, two substances that were deeply embedded in their understandings of the world and their place within it. Claudia Brosseder's remarkable new book asks us to add a third: the tail feathers of the scarlet macaw (*Ara macao*). Yet if the first pair of materials seem at home in the high Andes where the centre of Inka power resided, macaws, denizens of the lowland forests that lay thousands of metres below to the east, seem out of place. One of Brosseder's aims is to address this discrepancy directly by using what she terms 'Inka bird idiom' – the dense networks of knowledge and associations that wove around birds like macaws and their feathers in the Andes during the fifteenth to mid-seventeenth century (periodised in the book as the Long Late Horizon) – to connect the Inka of the Andean *altiplano* to the human and non-human inhabitants of Amazonia, populations that scholars most often treat in isolation.

This desire to call attention to the material and intellectual networks that linked these regions in the period is but one of many such acts of connection that animate this study. In fact, it takes as its subject the ways in which the Inka themselves conceptually connected what to modern Western eyes appear to be a dizzying array of seemingly unrelated things: the plumage of the *camantira* (Paradise Tanager, *Tangara chilensis*), the unification of sun and rain, the creation of lowland plants and animals, and successful warfare, for example. Brosseder likens these Inka

meaning-making processes to acts of symbolic bundling, arguing that because of the extent to which birds and their feathers served as key nodes in these expansive webs of knowledge, holistic comprehension of the Inka is impossible without acknowledging their focus on avian life (p. 6).

Accordingly, each individual chapter unpacks one such bundle, coalescing to different degrees of density around a type of bird and the objects and ritual actions used by Inka actors in the Long Late Horizon to invoke both their specific attributes and their attendant associations. In each, she draws on an array of material and textual evidence – including the accounts of colonial-period authors and their various Andean informants – whose data she treats, in her words, archaeologically, by ‘dust[ing] away the layers of interpretation that surround those facts [to assess] how each layer affects and creates the meaning of our most sought-after finds: the Inka birds, feathers, and feathered objects in situ’ (p. 9).

Although brief summaries fail to convey the intricacies of this bundling process and, as such, do a disservice to Brosseder’s ability to explicate the conceptual entanglements that result, the chapters proceed as follows. The first demonstrates the key role played by the plumage of the *corequenque* (Mountain Caracara, *Phalco boenus megalopterus*) and other species in instantiating genealogies of nobility and power for high-status Inka males. The second revisits the assemblage of Inka objects and mummified bodies found in 1999 on the summit of the Llullaillaco volcano in the southern Andes, arguing that the many feathers deployed there served to embody deities and Cusco-area sacred spaces (*wak’u*), as well as to grant Inka ritual specialists the ability to communicate with these entities. The third takes up the question of macaws, long acknowledged as important for many Andean cultures yet for reasons that have remained unclear, whose feathers were incorporated into and represented by an array of objects produced throughout Inka territory. Because macaws were bundled together with both water and healing – associations that Brosseder argues originated in Amazonian contexts – these objects facilitated communication between Inka ritual specialists and bodies of water as well as instantiating harmonies that operated on earthly and cosmic scales. Chapter 4 traces the meaning and function of two types of feathers within the context of Inka statecraft: iridescent bronze-green plumes from the family *Trogonidae* known as *pillco*, and white feathers called *ttokto* that were freshly plucked from a range of highland species, arguing that they served as powerful embodiments of territorial expansion and loyal vassalage, respectively. The final chapter returns to the question of macaw feathers and their significance to the Inka, but it does so in the context of the last decades of Inka rule, marked by their retreat to the cloud-forest outpost of present day Espíritu Pampa, Peru. Perched at the midway point between the high Andes and lowland Amazonia, this geographically significant location sets the stage for a discussion of Inka acknowledgment of the vitality of certain types of feathers like those of the macaw and their indebtedness to ‘arcane lowland medico-religious knowledge and practices’ (p. 237).

Taken together, these chapters demonstrate Brosseder’s dazzling ability to follow networks of meaning. This is fuelled in large part by innovative readings of a wide array of evidence, including noteworthy engagement with the manuscripts authored by the Mercedarian friar Martín de Murúa and illustrated by Guaman Poma de Ayala around the turn of the seventeenth century. Yet equally

commendable is the information she draws from her keen observations of birds themselves. Careful attention to the morphology of the *corequenque*'s black and white flight feathers yields a thrilling re-reading of the iconic so-called Inka 'checkerboard' tunics, such as the example housed in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (accession no. 2017.674). Renaming them *corequenque* tunics after the bird that she argues they were made to resemble is, for Brosseder, a decolonial act that 'captures Andean meaning-making processes from an Andean perspective' (p. 37). This sensitive consideration of birds' formal qualities is coupled with an equally attentive evaluation of avian behaviour: the *corequenques*' tendency to form social groups and their ability to both walk confidently as well as fly shed light on their significance for Long Late Horizon Inka. Crucially, Brosseder makes clear that they did not serve as symbols, but rather as causal agents (p. 33): humans who donned their feathers or woven approximations of them gained their abilities to work cooperatively and to survey the land from multiple vantage points.

I single out the Mountain Caracara as one of the more straightforward examples of Brosseder's approach from the book's first chapter. While perhaps less immediately satisfying, more rewarding of close reading and representative of her willingness to navigate the complexities of Inka bundles are the many sections in which other idioms play a larger role. This raises the question of the value of isolating one of them (bird, in this case) and arguing for its centrality: however practical, does this imposition of twenty-first century Western taxonomies ultimately distort the very conceptual bundles that the book aims to survey? A case might be made for sharing this prime position with a metallurgical idiom, one which is prominently woven throughout the book.

Brosseder acknowledges the agglutinative nature of these 'integrative ecologies' in the book's lucid conclusion (p. 268), however. Her sensitivity to these concerns, coupled with the evidence she deploys throughout – her deft uses of etymology at several key moments, for instance – makes a convincing case for the overwhelming relevance of avian life as the 'ideological apparatus' (p. 266) at the heart of Inka meaning making. In the end, charting the values that Inka people ascribed to birds helps make tangible the networks they used to join not only all manner of entities, but also the Andes and Amazonia, a region whose humid forests fostered the development of bird idioms that 'provided an ur-matrix' (p. 257) for those that flourished high above them.

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