

Colonial hydraulic archeology: authorities, infrastructure and political networks (Lima, 1535-1796)

Responsible researcher: Martha Bell, Gilda Cogorno and Gabriel Ramón

Research assistants: Marcos Alarcón and Moisés Cueva

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Instituto Riva-Agüero (IRA)

This interdisciplinary research (colonial archeology, historical geography) aims at understanding the water usage and control in intramural Lima and its immediate rural surroundings. In particular, this project covers the relations existing between hydraulic infrastructure and the authorities involved in its management for approaching to urban power networks through three conjunctures (1535, 1617, 1746). To that effect, we articulate the environmental history and political economy from a perspective which puts emphasis on material culture.

During the colony, changes to hydraulic system morphology were conditioned by social relations between the residents of the city of Lima and the political power managed by each social group in front of official political projects of the State. These relations were materialized in the urban textile during the early colonial period, and from that time it was one of the key elements in political negotiation. In this sense, the project has two areas of interest: hydraulic system infrastructure and authorities controlling the water use.

With a widest perspective than the preceding studies, we match three different conjunctures, covering the city as a whole. Preliminarily, we are interested in working on change conjunctures. To that effect, we selected three significant dates (1535, 1617, 1746). The first one determines Lima foundation when the pre-colonial systems begin to be adjusted / transformed in order to serve the colonial metropolis. Camayoc passage from irrigation ditches to the water master. The second one is related to the application of "Water Distribution" of Juan de Canseco, considered as a regime consolidation. The third one is marked by the big earthquake which destroyed a big part of the city and which coincides with the application of Bourbon reforms, including a change to the usage and distribution of waters consolidated with Cerdán regulations, and Topographic Plan.