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Claiming Nobility in the Monarquía Hispánica: The Search for Status by Inca, Aztec, and Nasrid Descendants at the Habsburg Court

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Article abstract

By the early seventeenth century, petitioners at the royal court in Madrid who claimed descent from the Inca rulers of Peru, the Aztec rulers of Mexico, and the Nasrid emirs of Granada found ways to acquire noble status and secure rights to their ancestral lands in the form of entailed estates. Their success in securing noble status and title to their mayorazgos (entailed estates) rested on strategies, used over the course of several generations, that included marriages with the peninsular nobility, ties of godparentage and patronage, and military service to the crown. This article will examine the networks formed in Madrid between roughly 1600 and 1630 when the descendants of the Inca and Aztec rulers interacted with peninsular noble families at court, obtaining noble status and entry into the military orders and establishing their mayorazgos. Their strategies for claiming nobility show striking parallels to those adopted by the Morisco nobility, and one aim of this article is to suggest how knowledge of such strategies circulated among families both at the royal court in Madrid and in the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru.

Claiming Nobility in the Monarquía Hispánica: The Search for Status by Inca, Aztec, and Nasrid Descendants at the Habsburg Court

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By the early seventeenth century, petitioners at the royal court in Madrid who claimed descent from the Inca rulers of Peru, the Aztec rulers of Mexico, and the Nasrid emirs of Granada found ways to acquire noble status and secure rights to their ancestral lands in the form of entailed estates. Their success in securing noble status and title to their mayorazgos (entailed estates) rested on strategies, used over the course of several generations, that included marriages with the peninsular nobility, ties of godparentage and patronage, and military service to the crown. This article will examine the networks formed in Madrid between roughly 1600 and 1630 when the descendants of the Inca and Aztec rulers interacted with peninsular noble families at court, obtaining noble status and entry into the military orders and establishing their mayorazgos. Their strategies for claiming nobility show striking parallels to those adopted by the Morisco nobility, and one aim of this article is to suggest how knowledge of such strategies circulated among families both at the royal court in Madrid and in the viceroyalties of New Spain and Peru.

Au début du XVII^e siècle, à la cour de Madrid, des pétitionnaires affirmant être les descendants des souverains incas du Pérou, des aztèques du Mexique et des émirs nasrides de Grenade trouvèrent des moyens d'accéder au statut de nobles et de garantir, sous la forme de biens inaliénables, leurs droits sur les terres ancestrales. S'assurer le statut de noble et le droit à ses mayorazgos (biens inaliénables) reposait sur des stratégies, employées pendant plusieurs générations, telles que la création de liens de parrainage et de patronage, une politique de mariage avec la noblesse péninsulaire et le service militaire. Cet article examine les réseaux formés à Madrid entre 1600 et 1630 lorsque les descendants des souverains incas et aztèques interagirent à la cour avec les familles nobles de la péninsule, au fur et à mesure qu'ils obtenaient le statut de nobles, qu'ils entraient dans les ordres militaires et qu'ils établissaient leurs mayorazgos. Il y a de surprenantes ressemblances entre les différentes stratégies qu'ils mirent en œuvre pour revendiquer un titre de noblesse et celles qu'adopta la noblesse morisque dans le même but. L'un des objectifs de cet article est de suggérer comment ces stratégies et la connaissance de ces stratégies circulaient entre familles à la cour royale de Madrid ainsi que dans les cours vice-royales de la Nouvelle-Espagne et du Pérou.

In 1623, Miguel Venegas de Granada, a member of the Morisco (Christianized Muslim) elite, published a verse chronicle that commemorated the festivities held in Madrid, marking the engagement of the Prince of Wales, the future

Charles I, to Infanta María Anna of Austria. The chronicle, or *relación*, also celebrated the intermarriages between noble families of the different Iberian kingdoms, and included prominent references to Venegas de Granada's own relatives and family history. Venegas de Granada, who held the position of gentleman of the royal chamber (*gentilhombre de la casa del rey*), presented himself as the "legitimate great-great-grandson [...] of King Zagal, the last [ruler] of Granada."¹ The poem identified the members of the Spanish nobility who participated in festivities that included jousting (*juegos de cañas*) and bullfighting, and his own family members. He describes the entry of

the high Venegas / don Luis, for whom fame / immortalizes his deeds
/ with sovereign actions. / He shows well in his Royal blood / that the
Principe Lusitania / Egas Muñiz, gave Venegas / one thousand years to
our Spain. / Where they produce Kings / of my lineage and my Granada, /
because through high marriages / the houses become interrelated.²

Venegas de Granada praised the intermarriages that had been part of a long policy of incorporating elite families of conquered kingdoms into the Spanish nobility. Among the nobles participating in the festivities and represented in Venegas de Granada's *relación* was Pedro Cortés Ramírez de Arellano, Marquis del Valle, whose uncle Martín Cortés was the mestizo son of Hernán Cortés and Malintzin.³ Also present was Álvaro Antonio Enríquez de Almansa y Borja, Marquess of Alcañizes, whose brother Juan Enríquez de Borja was married to Ana María de Loyola Coya, a direct descendant from the Inca rulers on her mother's side, and whose status as the 1st Marquise of Oropesa had been secured nearly a decade previously.

1. Miguel Venegas de Granada, *Relacion de las admirables y protentosas [sic] fiestas que el Quarto Filipo, Rey de entrambos mundos, y de las Españas, hizo por su Real persona, siendo las mejores que hasta oy se han visto, ni oydo dezir eternamente, por festejar los felicissimos y dichosos desposorios del serenissimo Principe de Gales, y la serenissima Infanta doña Maria* (Madrid 1623). Reprinted in *Relaciones poéticas sobre las fiestas de toros y cañas*, book 3, Biblioteca de The Hispanic Society of America (Valencia: Artes Gráficas Soler, S.A., 1972). All translations in this article from the original Spanish are my own.

2. Venegas de Granada, *Relacion*: "el alto Venegas / don Luis, a quien la fama / inmortaliza sus hechos / con acciones soberanas. / Bien muestra en su Regia sangre / que el Principe Lusitania / Egas Muñiz, dio Venegas / mil años a nuestra España. / Donde producen los Reyes / de mi estirpe y mi Granada, / pues por altos casamientos / emparentaren las casas." No line numbers are given in this edition.

3. Venegas de Granada, *Relacion*.

By the early seventeenth century, such intermarriages came to form an integral part of the image of a global Habsburg monarchy, a representation that individuals and families aspiring to noble status could tap into. Their arguments and strategies were successful precisely because they engaged with discourses leaning towards the creation and expansion of a universal Spanish Monarchy that favoured the incorporation of vassals and reward of military services. Such ideals can be contrasted with the post-conquest realities that placed individuals in contexts that privileged blood purity (*limpieza de sangre*) as a means for accessing high status and rewards, and that presented barriers to retaining control over their ancestral lands.

In this article I will analyze the strategies to acquire noble status that were used by local families who claimed descent from the natural lords (*señores naturales*) of lands that were in the process of being incorporated into the Spanish Crown as kingdoms (*reinos*). By the late sixteenth century, the descendants of the Nasrid emirs of Granada in Spain, the Aztec rulers of Tenochtitlan in New Spain, and the Inca rulers of Peru produced evidentiary documents (*probanzas*) proving their blood purity and extensive services to the crown, as they attempted to gain entry into the military orders of Santiago, Calatrava, and Alcántara, and lay claim to entailed estates (*mayorazgos*). Some married into long-established peninsular noble families to secure alliances and privileges for their descendants, and in the process commissioned elaborate genealogies and family histories. I will examine how petitioners sought to secure their noble status by invoking arguments about both blood purity and exemplary service. Such arguments were often gendered in the context of intermarriages with established noble families, and the role of primogeniture in the foundation of entailed estates. Histories crafted during this period by the petitioners or their advocates engaged with ideas about gender and marriage as they related to the Nasrid, Inca, and Mexica pasts, translating prior family structures into a new legal framework that privileged monogamous Christian marriages intended to produce legitimate children as heirs.

Miguel Venegas de Granada's verse chronicle celebrating the engagement of the daughter of the "king of both worlds," Philip III, to the son of James I of England and VI of Scotland offers a window into the overlapping spaces occupied at the Spanish court by noble families who claimed descent from Nasrid, Inca, or Aztec rulers. By the date of the engagement celebration of the Prince of Wales and the infanta, the establishment of the families' respective

estates was still within living memory. They included the marquisate of Oropesa granted to Ana María de Loyola Coya in 1614. Pedro de Granada Venegas Manrique de Mendoza would go on to secure the marquisate of Campotéjar in 1643, building on the royal favours granted to his ancestor Cidi Yahya al-Nayyar.⁴ Also present, though not mentioned in Venegas de Granada's account, was Don Pedro Tesifón Moctezuma, a direct descendant on his father's side of the Aztec emperor Moctezuma II, who had recently arrived at the royal court in Madrid.⁵ He does appear in another printed account of the ongoing engagement festivities, the Spanish chronicler Andrés de Almansa y Mendoza's "A la Villa de Madrid Cabeza del Mundo" (To the villa of Madrid, height of the world).⁶ Almansa y Mendoza begins his account by drawing a comparison between the Spanish Monarchy and the Roman empire, in which the Spanish monarchs appear grander than the Caesars due to the monarchy's global expanse. In comparison to the borders or limits of the Roman empire, "those of Spain are measured by the sun in its voyage from Aries to Pisces." In honour of the Prince of Wales's visit, "in imitation of the Romans," an amphitheatre was built to display wild animals, bullfights, and "gladiators in the exercise and games of arms."⁷ Like Venegas de Granada, Mendoza included in his *relación* short dedications to recognize the prowess of individual courtiers and nobles at court who competed in the jousts and bullfights. Regarding Tesifón Moctezuma, Almansa y Mendoza writes: "Moctezuma showed what is due to his imperial blood and the valour of his arm, so that a bull fled from him in fear. He delivered so strong a blow [to the bull] with his sword that he left its life on the line."⁸ Possessing royal or imperial blood became a powerful argument that families could wield in countering doubts about their blood purity. It was certainly this point that Tesifón Moctezuma, already a knight of the Order of

4. The Granada Venegas family established several entailed estates of varying sizes and importance in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. See the introduction to José Antonio García Luján, ed., *Documentos de la Casa de Granada. Linaje Granada Venegas, Marqueses de Campotéjar* (Huésca: Fundación C. Ntra. Sra. del Carmen y Fundación Portillo, 2010).

5. I would like to thank Glyn Redworth for bringing it to my attention that Don Pedro Tesifón Moctezuma was also present at the events marking the engagement of the prince and the infanta. On the marriage negotiations see Glyn Redworth, *The Prince and the Infanta: The Cultural Politics of the Spanish Match* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

6. Bodleian Library (BOD) Arch.Seld. A subt. 18, Andrés de Almansa y Mendoza, "A la Villa."

7. Bodleian Library (BOD) Arch.Seld. A subt. 18, Andrés de Almansa y Mendoza, "A la Villa."

8. Bodleian Library (BOD) Arch.Seld. A subt. 18, Andrés de Almansa y Mendoza, "A la Villa."

Santiago, emphasized in Madrid as he petitioned for his noble title.⁹ Descent from kings allowed individuals to claim noble status despite having non-Christian ancestors, and he followed a pattern well established by the Morisco nobility.

The *mayorazgos* and titles acquired by the Morisco and Indigenous nobility reflect a long process of petitioning—of initiatives taken over the course of multiple generations to secure a family’s status after the conquests of Granada in 1492, Tenochtitlan in 1521, and the Andean fortified stronghold of Vilcabamba in 1572. To understand this process, we should ask what were the dynamics that had occurred in the years leading up to the creation of the marquisesates of Campotéjar and Oropesa and the countdom of Moctezuma, as control over land and labour became increasingly contested and as “old Christian” families—those with no Jewish or Muslim ancestry—also staked their claims to rewards in the form of noble titles, lands, and *encomiendas* (grants of Indigenous tributaries). The lands and rents that came under the marquisesates of Campotéjar and Oropesa and the countdom of Moctezuma were important both financially and symbolically. Their social significance rested in their recognition of the royal bloodlines of the title holders. For example, the marquiseate of Oropesa included rents from the *repartimiento* of the extensive valley of Yucay, an area that had been controlled by the Inca rulers. Documents both requesting and granting privileges to Ana María de Loyola Coya highlighted the historical significance of the estates under Inca rule and translated their status under the Incas into a Castilian legal framework that would resonate with the crown’s political imperatives. As the only child of Beatriz Clara Coya and the great-granddaughter of Manco Inca, the “crowned King of Peru” (“Rey coronado del Piru”), Ana María was directly in line to inherit: “if the Spaniards had not entered the Indies she would be the possessor of those kingdoms.”¹⁰ Similarly, the countdom of Moctezuma and the title of Count of Moctezuma de Tultengo represented the connection

9. In 1627, Philip IV granted Pedro Tesifón Moctezuma the title of Count of Moctezuma.

10. Biblioteca de la Universidad de Sevilla A 110/157(30): “Por Iuan Enriquez de Borja, como marido y conjunta persona de doña Ana María de Loyola Coya” (1612), accessed 12 August 2020, archive.org: “[...] si los Españoles no huuieran entrado en las indias, fuera la poseedora de aquellos Reynos, y oy se halla sin ellos.” On the marquiseate of Oropesa see Guillermo Lohmann Villena, “El señorío de los marqueses de Santiago de Oropesa en el Perú,” *Anuario de historia del derecho español* 19 (1948–49): 347–458.

that the Moctezuma family expressed to the *cacicazgo* of Tula through Tesifón Moctezuma's grandmother, María Miahuaxochitl.¹¹ Finally, the marquisate of Campotéjar granted to Pedro de Granada Venegas Manrique de Mendoza comprised the towns (villas) of Campotéjar and Jayena. Prior to being granted the marquisate, he had held the hereditary titles of *alcaide* of the Generalife, Lord of the House of Granada, and Lord of Campotéjar. Such titles also recognized the historical ties of the Granada Venegas family to the region as descendants of Nasrid rulers through the link to the Generalife summer palace and gardens of the Nasrid rulers, and their status as the only Morisco family to be lords of vassals (*señores de vasallos*).¹²

In the Americas, the Spanish Crown faced a dilemma in wanting to reward military service and encourage further "conquests" while restricting each family's local authority given their potential to foment rebellion. Citing concerns over the exploitation of Indigenous peoples, the crown issued the New Laws of 1542. By doing so, the crown also sought to limit the growth of a nobility in the Americas, and it restricted the ability of conquistadores who sought rewards in the form of encomiendas to hold them for more than one term. Although the New Laws initially sought to revert encomiendas to crown control after an encomendero's death, they were met with open rebellion and years of civil unrest in the Peruvian Andes. In New Spain, Viceroy Antonio de Mendoza averted rebellion by not enforcing the most controversial parts. Encomenderos in New Spain and other parts of the Americas soon turned to petitioning and litigation in an attempt to make them hereditary.¹³ Indigenous elites also encountered restrictions. For example, when Vilcabamba fell and the Inca ruler Tupac Amaru was executed, Viceroy Francisco de Toledo exiled

11. For the royal provision on 13 September 1627 that granted the title of Conde de Moctezuma de Tultengo to Pedro Tesifón Moctezuma, see Archivo General de Indias [hereinafter cited as AGI], Indiferente 451, L. A11, 6v–7r. His grandfather, Pedro Moctezuma, faced numerous and often successful lawsuits from the *principales* of Tula who challenged the Moctezuma family's claims to their lands. See Donald E. Chipman, *Moctezuma's Children: Aztec Royalty under Spanish Rule, 1520–1700* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2010), 145–47. See also Francisco Luis Jiménez Abollado, "Encomiendas vacas y rentas de don Pedro Tesifón Moctezuma y su familia en la primera mitad del siglo XVII," *Fronteras de la Historia* 23.1 (2018): 162–83.

12. Enrique Soria Mesa, *Linajes granadinos* (Granada: Diputación de Granada, 2008), 75–84; Elizabeth Ashcroft Terry, "The Granada Venegas Family, 1431–1643: Nobility, Renaissance and Morisco Identity" (PhD dissertation, University of California, Berkeley, 2015), v–vi.

13. Silvio Zavala, *La encomienda indiana* (México: Porrúa, 1992).

the surviving members of the Inca ruling families from the regions around Cusco. Many travelled to the Peninsula, and some also settled in New Spain.¹⁴ To gain recognition as nobility under Spanish rule, and thereby reclaim some of their former status and properties, these families followed strategies that show striking parallels across time and distance. A handful of elite Indigenous families were surprisingly successful in securing control over their ancestors' lands and gaining acknowledgement from the crown. My article will focus on members of these prominent families, who include Pedro Tesifón Moctezuma, Melchor Carlos Inca, Beatriz Clara Coya, her daughter Ana María de Loyola Coya, and her grandson Juan Enríquez de Borja. I will suggest how the actions and self-representation of the Inca and Aztec nobility at the royal court in Madrid could have been influenced by earlier Muslim-Christian relations as reflected in the history of the Granada Venegas family. In some cases, prior capitulation agreements in the Mediterranean context were cited as legal precedent in negotiations in Spanish America. It should be noted that this was not an entirely unidirectional process, whereby the Granada Morisco precedent influenced policies and strategies adopted in the Americas and never the other way around. The relationships established by all these elite families, and mediated by other members of the high Spanish nobility at the viceregal and royal courts, remained in constant dialogue.

Morisco nobility at the Spanish court

Miguel Venegas de Granada's references to his relative Don Luis Venegas, and to the Granada Venegas and Venegas de Córdoba families more broadly through the intermarriages between noble houses, attest to the complex relationships emerging between some elite old Christian and new Christian families after the conquest of Granada.¹⁵ Such relationships are also important for understanding

14. José Carlos de la Puente Luna, *Andean Cosmopolitans: Seeking Justice and Reward at the Spanish Royal Court* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2018). While my article focuses on a few prominent families, the reality was more complex. Not only the descendants of Moctezuma and Huayna Capac, but also Indigenous elites from communities across the Andes and Mesoamerica petitioned the crown for recognition of their nobility. In the case of the Morisco elites, not only the Granada Venegas but other families claimed descent from the Nasrid ruling family and acquired noble status.

15. For a discussion of the intermarriages between the Granada Venegas family and other noble families, see Terry, "The Granada Venegas Family."

what occurred in subsequent decades, when Indigenous petitioners travelled to the royal court in Madrid to present their applications for noble status and entry into the military orders. Even successful applicants could spend several years collecting information about their services to the crown and their lineages, lodging multiple appeals before a favourable decision was reached. Indigenous and Morisco nobles overlapped temporally at court, and some received positions as courtiers in the royal households, raising provocative questions regarding the extent to which they might have interacted with each other. The Granada Venegas family was one of a few peninsular Morisco families who became recognized as nobles who possessed blood purity and could therefore bear arms and hold prestigious offices.

The Granada Venegas family's Muslim forebears had established alliances with Christian rulers by the mid-fifteenth century. Nasrid rulers had entered into vassalage agreements with the Christian kings of Castile over the preceding two centuries, and interaction was common across the frontier between Granada and Castile.¹⁶ Elites who dissented with the ruler of their own kingdom could and did shift their support to another monarch of a different faith, their political allegiance accompanied by religious conversion. Along the Granada-Castile frontier, an individual's political affinities and membership in a shared elite culture could overcome their adherence to a religious community.¹⁷ For much of the fifteenth century, Nasrid Granada was immersed in civil wars that paralleled similar struggles for political supremacy among Iberian Christian kingdoms.¹⁸ By the early 1480s, Nasrid Granada suffered a further split within the ruling dynasty just as the Catholic monarchs Ferdinand and Isabel had

16. Muhammad ibn al-Ahmar, founder of the Nasrid dynasty, became a vassal of Fernando III of Castile following the defeat of his army in 1246. As a condition of the surrender, Nasrid Granada had to provide military assistance to Castile. On this period of Nasrid history, see Bárbara Boloix Gallardo, *De la Taifa de Arjona al Reino Nazarí de Granada, 1232–1246* (Jaén: Instituto de Estudios Giennenses, 2005).

17. On the complexity of interactions across the frontier and the role of the Muslim rear guards of the Castilian and Aragonese kings, see Mercedes García-Arenal and Fernando Rodríguez Mediano, *The Orient in Spain: Converted Muslims, the Forged Gospels of Granada, and the Rise of Orientalism* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), dx.doi.org/10.1163/9789004250291; Ana Echevarría, *Caballeros de la frontera. La guardia morisca de los Reyes de Castilla (1410–1467)* (Madrid: UNED, 2006); and Hussein Fancy, *The Mercenary Mediterranean: Sovereignty, Religion, and Violence in the Medieval Crown of Aragon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016), dx.doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226329789.001.0001.

18. José Manuel Nieto Soria, ed., *La monarquía como conflicto en la Corona castellano-leonesa (c. 1230–1504)* (Madrid: Sílex, 2006).

consolidated their power and mobilized to conquer the only remaining Muslim kingdom. Two factions formed: Sultan Abu' l-Hasan (Muley Hacen), who had ruled Granada in 1464–82 and 1483–85, and his brother Muhammad al-Zagal (El Zagal) faced opposition from Muhammad XII of Granada, who was Muley Hacen's son and known in the Christian sources as Boabdil. The ancestors of Don Pedro de Granada Venegas and Miguel Venegas de Granada, Nasrid elites who had developed close ties with the Christians, supported Muley Hacen and El Zagal against Boabdil. In 1489, El Zagal's cousin, Cidi Yahya al-Nayyar, was acting as *alcaide* (governor) in the Andalusian cities of Baza, Guadix, and Almería. He also had a distinguished lineage as the grandson of the Nasrid ruler Yusuf IV who had allied with Juan II of Castile in 1431–32.¹⁹ When Ferdinand and Isabel's forces laid siege to Baza in 1489, Cidi Yahya al-Nayyar surrendered. As part of the peace negotiations, he accepted baptism and adopted the Christian name Pedro de Granada. His son Ali Omar ibn Nazar was also baptized as Alonso Venegas.²⁰ Shortly after the fall of Baza, El Zagal surrendered Guadix and Almería to Ferdinand and was named the lord of Andarax in exchange.²¹

During the sixteenth century, members of the Granada Venegas family adopted strategies to cement their high status despite the increasing suspicions of the Moriscos. For several generations, they sought the patronage of the old Christian nobility, forging alliances and intermarrying with them.²² The Mendoza family played an important role in the Granada Venegas family's rise. Pedro de Granada established close ties with Íñigo López de Mendoza, 2nd Count of Tendilla, addressing each other on familiar terms as relatives (*parientes*).²³ Alonso Venegas married Juana de Mendoza, a lady-in-waiting of

19. For a history of the Granada Venegas family, see Terry, "The Granada Venegas Family." Terry notes that Sultan Yusuf IV's son and Cidi Yahya al-Nayyar's father, Abencelim, made a vassalage agreement with a Christian monarch in 1474. The family had a history of collaboration with Christian rulers in their attempts to consolidate their own power and interests locally (Terry, 22). For the ratification of the vassalage agreement between Yusuf IV and Juan II, see García Luján, *Documentos de la Casa de Granada*, 23.

20. On the Morisco nobility, see García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, ch. 3; Enrique Soria Mesa, "Una gran familia. Las élites moriscas del reino de Granada," *Estudis* 35 (2009): 9–35; and Enrique Soria Mesa, *Linajes Granadinos* (Granada: Diputación Granada, 2009).

21. Terry, 29. After the fall of Granada, El Zagal left the Iberian Peninsula for North Africa.

22. Soria Mesa, "Una gran familia."

23. Terry, 50–51.

Isabel I and daughter of Juan Hurtado de Mendoza, Lord of Cañete. Their son, Pedro de Granada Venegas y Mendoza, married as his second wife María de Mendoza, the daughter of Luis Hurtado de Mendoza.²⁴

The Granada Venegas family continued to seek recognition for Cidi Yahya's service to Fernando and Isabel, and in 1533 Alonso Venegas was granted the *mayorazgo* of the Casa de Granada. The family emphasized the voluntary conversion of their ancestor Pedro de Granada, and the alliances he forged when aiding Christian forces in the 1480s. Pedro's grandson, Alonso Granada Venegas, held social meetings where prominent Spanish humanists gathered, and his family's library shows the importance of works of history to the family's social aspirations. In this context, literary works were produced, such as the *Origen de la Casa de Granada*, that promoted the interests of the Granada Venegas family.²⁵

The way the Granada Venegas family represented their forebears as loyal Christians who descended from royal lines parallels how the descendants of the Inca rulers represented their ancestors. While service to the crown became crucial for accessing entry into the military orders, or for obtaining a title of nobility or a *mayorazgo*, more was often required. Petitioners had to grapple with multiple, overlapping discourses about what constituted nobility, and they had to engage with broader debates about whether nobility could be acquired through actions or whether it was inherited, transmitted through bloodlines. Petitions by Indigenous litigants were similarly supported by printed histories that elevated royal lineages, most notably by the Inca Garcilaso de la Vega's *Comentarios Reales*.²⁶ Individuals who claimed descent from the Nasrid, Aztec, and Inca rulers produced genealogical accounts that traced their ancestry to

24. García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, 75. On intermarriage, see Max Deardorff, "The Ties that Bind: Intermarriage between Moriscos and Old Christians in Early Modern Spain, 1526–1614," *Journal of Family History* 42.3 (2017): 250–70, dx.doi.org/10.1177/0363199017711214.

25. Terry, ch. 3. See also García-Arenal and Rodríguez Mediano, *The Orient in Spain*; María del Carmen Álvarez Márquez, "Las lecturas de Don Pedro de Granada Venegas, I Marqués de Campotéjar (1559–1643)," *HID* 35 (2008): 149–89.

26. Garcilaso de la Vega el Inca, *Primera Parte de los Comentarios Reales que tratan del origen de los yncas, reyes que fueron del Peru* (Lisbon 1609). José Cárdenas Bunsen places Garcilaso's work in the context of the controversies surrounding the Sacromonte lead books of Granada, in *La aparición de los libros plúmbeos y los modos de escribir la historia. De Pedro de Castro al Inca Garcilaso de la Vega* (Madrid: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2018), dx.doi.org/10.31819/9783954876853.

kings and lords, or *señores naturales*. In stressing their royal lineage, families whose ancestors included non-Christians and whose lands had been conquered and incorporated into the Spanish Crown staked their claims to nobility.²⁷

Over his lifetime, Pedro de Granada Venegas had opportunities to develop ties to the royal court and household. During the first decade of the seventeenth century, he moved his own household from Granada to Madrid to be closer to the royal court, where he had already served in his youth, first as page (*menino*) to Philip III's mother, Ana of Austria, and then as a companion to Philip III.²⁸ While petitioning to enter the Order of Alcántara, he followed the court to Valladolid, where it was located between 1601 and 1606. In 1607, Pedro was finally made a *caballero* of the Order of Alcántara.²⁹ He continued to petition for entry into the high nobility, as an equivalent title had been promised to his ancestor Cidi Yahya al-Nayyar.

Philip IV's letter granting the marquissate of Campotéjar to Pedro de Granada Venegas in 1643 acknowledged the extensive services of his ancestors. He had inherited the title of Lord of the House of Granada and the post of *alcaide perpetuo* (governor for life) of the Royal House of the Generalife. The king highlighted the "antiquity of your house and its quality and how your forebears have served my Royal Crown." The grant stated that Pedro was entitled to rewards for being

fifth grandson of King Jusuf Albenamaul Alnaiar, King of Granada, ally of King Don Juan II, descendant from the male line of King Abenud who

27. Cecilia Tarruell demonstrates that some North African petitioners for favours at the royal court who were from elite families also emphasized their royal bloodlines to elude the blood purity requirement. See Cecilia Tarruell Pellegrin, "Orán y don Carlos de África, un caballero de Santiago atípico," in *Orán. Historia de la Corte Chica*, ed. Miguel Ángel de Bunes Ibarra and Beatriz Alonso Acero (Madrid: Ediciones Polifemo, 2011), 263–88. On how blood purity affected social status in Spanish America, see María Elena Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions: Limpieza de Sangre, Religion, and Gender in Colonial Mexico* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008).

28. Terry, 161.

29. Terry analyzes his lengthy application to join the Order of Alcántara, a military order that placed greater emphasis on *limpieza* than did the Order of Santiago to which other members of the Granada Venegas family belonged. Don Pedro's entry into the Order of Alcántara shows how he argued successfully that royal blood took precedence over Muslim ancestry. See Terry, ch. 5. See also José Antonio García Luján, "El alma única y universal heredera del patrimonio rústico de Don Pedro de Granada Venegas Manrique de Mendoza, primer Marqués de Campotéjar (1643)," *HID* 44 (2017): 131–50.

was killed in Almería, of the lineage of the Kings of Zaragoza, and of Don Pedro de Granada your great-great grandfather who was moved by the holy spirit to adopt our Holy Catholic Faith. [...King Ferdinand] received him as his vassal, as well as his son and nephews, baptizing them secretly in his chamber so that his people wouldn't leave him until the transfer of power at Guadix and Almería was complete.³⁰

Ferdinand had ordered that the Granada Venegas be treated "like the great knights of his Kingdom, as their person and lineage deserved, and that they and their descendants [...] would never ever pay the Alcabala."³¹ Elizabeth Terry notes in her work on the Granada Venegas family that some of the agreements in the treaty with Ferdinand, such as the granting of a dukedom, were not honoured, and Pedro de Granada's descendants continued to petition for entry into the high nobility.³² For the Granada Venegas family, the voluntary conversion and alliances of their ancestors with the Catholic monarchs cemented their status and claims to continued recognition and rewards. Their noble status granted them exemption from taxation, and it was this privilege that the descendants of the Incas also sought in Cusco, as reflected in their petitions to the crown in 1604. For families who claimed descent from the Inca rulers, tribute exemption was especially pressing because they found themselves forced by local officials into carrying out heavy labour, despite their nobility.

Muslim-Christian relations as precedent

Policies forged in the kingdom of Granada regarding its Muslim and then Morisco populations were sometimes cited as a precedent for decisions involving Indigenous and mestizo litigants in Spanish America. Historians have long acknowledged that centuries of interactions between Christians and Muslims on the Iberian Peninsula influenced Spanish policies toward Indigenous polities in the Americas during the decades following the initial

30. Archivo Histórico de la Nobleza, BAENA, C.210, D.18, "Fragmento de una carta de merced del rey Felipe [IV] concediendo a Pedro de Granada Venegas, caballero de Alcántara, el título de marqués de Campotejar," 1r.

31. Archivo Histórico de la Nobleza, BAENA, C.210, D.18, 1r.

32. Terry, 26.

Spanish invasions.³³ Less studied are the specific contours of the ways that prior Iberian incursions into non-Christian communities, whose participants invoked the concepts of conquest and vassalage, operated on an everyday level within an expanding geo-political space that was emerging by the sixteenth century as the Spanish Monarchy. The treaties, legal codes, and customary practices that governed relations between Muslims and Christians in the Iberian Christian kingdoms continued to be cited as legal precedent for an array of Spanish political strategies for asserting jurisdiction over Mesoamerican and Andean lands and peoples. Such treaties and customs were also cited by local individuals and families who struggled to assert their rights and retain control over their land as it fell under Spanish rule. Capitulation treaties following the conquests of the Nasrid kingdom of Granada in 1492 and with the last Inca rulers at Vilcabamba in 1565–70 show interesting parallels. References to the conquest of Granada appear as legal precedent in the harrowing court case in the mid-1560s surrounding the status and properties of Ana María de Loyola Coya's mother, Beatriz Clara Coya.

In 1566, a legal battle raged over the coerced marriage of the Spaniard Cristóbal de Maldonado to Beatriz Clara Coya, the seven-year-old Inca heiress of the vast *encomienda* of Yucay.³⁴ She was the daughter of Diego Sayri Tupac, a son of the ruler Manco Inca who had gathered his forces to resist the Spaniards after Atahualpa's execution. After the initial Spanish invasions and the capture and execution of Atahualpa, Francisco Pizarro recognized Atahualpa's brother Manco Inca as the successor to the Inca empire. By 1537, Manco Inca had challenged the imperatives of Spanish officials in Peru, and he gathered with his supporters in the remote fortress of Vilcabamba to establish an Inca state from which to resist Spanish forces and try to reestablish control over the vast

33. See Mercedes García-Arenal, "Moriscos e indios: para un estudio comparado de métodos de conquista y evangelización," *Chronica Nova: Revista de Historia Moderna de la Universidad de Granada* 20 (1992): 153–76. More recently, see Karen Graubart, "Learning from the Qadi: The Jurisdiction of Local Rule in the Early Colonial Andes," *Hispanic American Historical Review* 95.2 (2015): 195–228, [dx.doi.org/10.1215/00182168-2870764](https://doi.org/10.1215/00182168-2870764); Carina L. Johnson, *Cultural Hierarchy in Sixteenth-Century Europe: The Ottomans and Mexicans* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); and Payton Phillips Quintanilla, "Imperial Occlusions: Mestizaje and Marian Mechanisms in Early Modern Andalucía and the Andes" (PhD dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2018).

34. For an analysis of the lawsuits over Beatriz's marriage, see Jeremy Ravi Mumford, "A Child Marriage in Early Colonial Cuzco," *Journal of Family History* 45.4 (2020): 1–28, [dx.doi.org/10.1177/0363199020928446](https://doi.org/10.1177/0363199020928446).

territories that had been part of the Inca Empire. After Manco Inca's death in 1544, Sayri Tupac was recognized as the next Inca ruler at Vilcabamba, but within a few years he negotiated with the Spaniards. In exchange for his cooperation, they granted Sayri Tupac control over extensive estates in the region that had belonged to his grandfather Huayna Capac. Shortly after his baptism and that of his wife and daughter Beatriz, Sayri Tupac died and his brother Titu Cusi Yupanqui resumed the Inca resistance movement.³⁵ Yupanqui continued to successfully repel Spanish forces from Vilcabamba, prompting Spanish officials to try to negotiate a treaty with him. In 1565, Licentiate Lope García de Castro who acted as Peru's interim governor between 1563 and 1569 offered Yupanqui a number of *mercedes* (favours) that included control over extensive properties, in exchange for accepting baptism, allowing Catholic missionaries into Vilcabamba, and adopting a relationship of vassalage to the Spanish Crown. Yupanqui died suddenly in 1570, and his brother Tupac Amaru assumed the role of the Inca ruler.

In the evolving 1566 lawsuit over Beatriz's marriage, a range of political actors invoked the concepts of nobility, blood purity, and descent from the *señores naturales*, citing negotiations during the campaigns to conquer Granada as procedural precedent for relations between Christian conquerors and the non-Christian rulers of subjugated territories. Decisions taken at Granada both explicitly and implicitly informed Spanish policies in the Americas regarding capitulation treaties, religious conversion, alliances through godparentage and marriage, and the creation of a multiethnic, multilocal nobility within a universal Spanish Monarchy.

The child Beatriz had been abducted by two Spanish brothers, Arias and Cristóbal Maldonado, who wanted control over her vast properties, and she was forced to marry Cristóbal. The legal arguments invoked by all parties in the context of Beatriz's case before the royal audience, or appellate court, which involved not only questions regarding consent to the marriage and its legality but also her subsequent rape by Cristóbal, reveal much about contemporary notions about nobility, blood purity, bodies, and ultimately race. Witnesses in the trial used the terms *casta*, or caste, to convey ideas about religious and ethnic lineage in relation to noble status. Beatriz's uncle Pedro de Bustinza, who had briefly acted as her guardian, invoked Granada in his condemnation of her

35. Catherine Julien, ed., "Introduction" to Titu Cusi Yupanqui, *History of How the Spaniards Arrived in Peru* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2006).

forced marriage to Cristóbal. Bustinza petitioned for the arrest of the Maldonado brothers for forcing Beatriz to marry and thereby rupturing the fragile peace talks underway with her uncle, Titu Cusi Yupanqui. Bustinza enumerated his reasons for demanding justice for so grave a crime. He emphasized Beatriz's royal lineage and descent from Manco Inca:

Doña Beatriz, a minor, is the granddaughter of the Inca, who had been the natural lord of this kingdom. There was a marriage contract to wed her to the son of the Inca who has risen up against your royal service. It was hoped that this would bring to peace the said Inca, and place [...] in your royal service all the Indians of these kingdoms.³⁶

Bustinza cited peninsular precedent:

[Y]our royal person has the custom to honour and make many grants to the children, grandchildren, and descendants of the foreign kings and Muslims even if you conquered them in war, which it appears was the case of the children and descendants of the Kings of Granada [1492] and of Bugia [1510] and of Tunis [1535].³⁷

How did knowledge about the conquests of Granada, Béjaïa, and Tunis reach the Andes, to be cited by Beatriz's uncle Pedro de Bustinza who was a mestizo, born in Cusco? In Spanish America, knowledge circulated about Muslims and Moriscos, influencing not only policies toward Indigenous peoples but also arguments made by Indigenous and mestizo litigants when confronting increasing Spanish encroachment on their autonomy and their land.³⁸ Bustinza averred that the marriage was unlawful, and Cristóbal was "not a man of the quality (*calidad*) or authority required for such a marriage."³⁹ He stressed Beatriz's high status, as a member of a royal family, if still a child, who possessed vassals over whom she might wield political influence in securing peace, if she were avenged and justice served.

36. AGI, Justicia 657, N.2, 323v.

37. AGI, Justicia 657, N.2, 323v.

38. Karoline P. Cook, *Forbidden Passages: Muslims and Moriscos in Colonial Spanish America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016), [dx.doi.org/10.9783/9780812292909](https://doi.org/10.9783/9780812292909).

39. AGI, Justicia 657, N.2, 324r.

The Treaty of Acobamba negotiated only months previously in 1565 between Spain and Titu Cusi Yupanqui placed as a condition the marriage between Beatriz and his young son, her cousin Quispe Tito. Such a marriage alliance could have cemented the power between Inca families, reflecting a longer tradition of marrying close relatives (siblings, cousins) in order to keep the rulership within the immediate family. This practice was also highlighted in subsequent years in petitions and histories regarding the purity of Inca lineages in order to promote the blood purity of their descendants. Representing the king's interests, the prosecutor in Beatriz's case argued that an agreement had been reached for Beatriz to marry Quispe Tito as per the terms of the Treaty of Acobamba. As a result, Beatriz had been placed "under his care and royal custody, to create a house and memory of the Incas who were lords over this kingdom and preserve in it their name and thereby perpetuate them." The prosecutor invoked the *repartimiento* (Indians assigned to forced labour), granted to Beatriz's father, Diego Sayri Tupac, following his conversion, which was "given to him perpetually, forever, something not done for anyone in this kingdom, not even the Marquis don Francisco Pizarro its discoverer. In this way, to preserve the *mayorazgo* he wants to marry her to a man of his lineage in order to preserve his family."⁴⁰ Entailed estates were granted to only very few native families who could prove direct descent from the Inca and Aztec rulers, in contrast to most *encomiendas* that were granted in the Americas to the "first conquerors" of a region and limited to a couple of generations. This exemption reflects both the success that the immediate descendants of the Inca and Aztec rulers had in the short term in securing their properties, as well as the rising competition with creole elites over control over land and tribute. By submitting to the Spanish Crown and entering into a relationship of vassalage, Titu Cusi Yupanqui would gain an estate, and the marriage between his son and Beatriz would be one way to secure it.⁴¹

The Treaty of Acobamba also granted amnesty to Titu Cusi Yupanqui and his generals. The prosecutor in Beatriz's case read out the terms: "In the name of Your Majesty I remove from them and their descendants all stain (*macula*) and infamy that they incurred for their said actions, and I [...] return them to the

40. AGI, Justicia 657, N.2, 452v.

41. The context of the resistance at Vilcabamba and the Treaty of Acobamba are discussed in Brian S. Bauer, Javier Fonseca Santa Cruz, and Miriam Araóz Silva, *Vilcabamba y la arqueología de la resistencia Inca* (Lima: Instituto Francés de Estudios Andinos, 2016).

status that they held before committing the said crimes.”⁴² The issue of descent and inheritance becomes important in not only the practical matter of granting amnesty but the ways that future generations would experience the impact of these events. The use of the term “stain,” or *macula*, here is significant, echoing the language used in blood purity investigations. As acting viceroy, Licentiate Lope García de Castro had acknowledged Titu Cusi Yupanqui’s acceptance of Christianity and vassalage to the Spanish Crown by offering favours to him and his family: “because he is a person of lineage, and the son of Inca parents, he is reserved the preeminence and exemptions that should be reserved for such persons of noble lineage.”⁴³ According to the treaty, the same status would also be granted to Titu Cusi Yupanqui’s wife, children, relatives, and captains, as persons “of lineage” who possessed nobility. Similarly, in the kingdom of Granada, Cidi Yahya al-Nayyar, after negotiating a peace with Ferdinand and accepting baptism, gained recognition not only for himself but for his descendants who could continue to request rewards from the monarch.

Beatriz Clara Coya’s case eventually reached the Council of Indies, where the prosecutor, Licentiate Gamboa, called for the Maldonado brothers’ execution for the “atrocious” crimes committed against Beatriz that included *lèse majesté*. Gamboa described Beatriz as “a girl so noble, [who was] of the caste and descendance of the kings of those provinces.”⁴⁴ The arguments made in her favour, and ultimately accepted by the judges as they aligned with the crown’s interests in negotiating a peace, had long-term implications. Gamboa asserted that Beatriz retained her status (*calidad*) as the

daughter and descendant of the kings of such great provinces, and that once reduced to the submission of Your Highness, although they were not Christians as is the said Doña Beatriz, and her parents are free and hold the lordship (*señorío*) over their property, and in this case it is concluded resolutely that they retain their nobility with this status.⁴⁵

42. AGI, Justicia 657, N.2, 460r–v. The document is among the provisions written and signed by Castro regarding the favour to the “ynga questa revelado” (Inca in the state of rebellion; 457v–458r). A copy was presented to the royal audience by the prosecutor Juan Bautista and dated Lima, 8 August 1565.

43. AGI, Justicia 657, N.2, 471r–v.

44. AGI, Justicia 657, N.2, 707v.

45. AGI, Justicia 657, N.2, 708r.

The issue of nobility as applied to Indigenous families claiming descent from the Inca rulers remained of pressing importance for securing rights. Indigenous petitioners had to master and deploy discourses about nobility and blood purity in order for their petitions to be successful. In the aftermath of Vilcabamba, with the capture and execution of the last Inca ruler Tupac Amaru in 1572, the surviving relatives of Titu Cusi Yupanqui and Tupac Amaru faced exile in Spain. Viceroy Francisco de Toledo and local officials were concerned that their presence would pose a threat to Spanish authority if they remained in the Andes. The discourses surrounding the status of Beatriz Clara Coya are telling in this regard. Spanish officials were acting on the precedent of relations with Muslim rulers as a template for their attempts to establish control and gain the acquiescence of ruling families in the Americas. In turn, members of elite Indigenous families in Mexico and Peru gained an awareness of Muslim-Christian relations on the Peninsula and in the Mediterranean and deployed this knowledge to their advantage. By the late sixteenth century, Indigenous and mestizo petitioners claiming descent from the natural lords (*señores naturales*) arrived at the Spanish court and litigated their noble status. In Madrid and Valladolid, they may have crossed paths with members of the Morisco nobility, whose strategies and aims were remarkably similar and ranged from commissioning works that told their version of history to proving service to the crown to enter the military orders and claim blood purity despite pervasive discourses that attempted to exclude Moriscos.

Inca and Aztec descendants at the royal court

As with the Morisco nobility, genealogical accounts that emphasized descent from kings were crucial for supporting the claims to nobility of the descendants of the Inca rulers.⁴⁶ For example, Melchor Carlos Inca applied in 1606 to enter

46. The historiography on the Inca nobility is extensive. See De la Puente Luna, *Andean Cosmopolitans*; Donato Amado Gonzales, *El estandarte real y la mascapaycha: historia de una institución inca colonial* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 2017); Ana María Lorandi, *De quimeras, rebeliones y utopías: La gesta del inca Pedro Bohorques* (Lima: Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1997); Scarlett O'Phelan Godoy, *Mestizos reales: en el virreinato del Perú: Indios nobles, caciques y capitanes de mita* (Lima: Fondo Editorial del Congreso del Perú, 2013); Rocío Quispe-Agnoli, *Nobles de papel: Identidades oscilantes y genealogías borrosas en los descendientes de la realeza inca* (Madrid: Iberoamericana-Vervuert, 2016), [dx.doi.org/10.31819/9783954878888](https://doi.org/10.31819/9783954878888).

the Order of Santiago. He was the son of Carlos Inca who was regarded as a direct descendant of the Inca ruler Huayna Capac and who held preeminent status among the Incas of Cusco. Melchor's application began with his genealogy, which identified his parents and grandparents. He claimed descent from the Incas through his paternal grandfather, Cristóbal Paullo Topa Inca, "the last king of the kingdoms of Peru," who was married to Catalina Tocto Usica, "also a descendant of the same House of the Incas."⁴⁷ In addition to Manco Inca, Diego Sayri Tupac, Titu Cusi Yupanqui, and Tupac Amaru, a handful of other individuals appear in the archival sources as "the last ruler of Peru." In part, this reflects the diarchic structure of the Inca empire where two rulers held complementary roles administering different areas, but also the ways that Inca rule was being undermined and fragmented after the arrival of the Spaniards. The Inca ruler Huayna Capac had died just before Francisco Pizarro's forces invaded the Andean region, leaving his sons Atahualpa and Huascar engaged in a violent struggle for succession. Manco Inca (Beatriz's grandfather) was their brother, as was Cristóbal Paullo Topa Inca (Melchor's grandfather). When petitioners and litigants used the Spanish legal system, prior Inca notions of duality and complementarity in governance, where women also held important political and religious roles, had to be translated and adapted to a system of European notions of monarchic succession based on primogeniture.⁴⁸

As per a royal provision issued by the Council of Orders, Melchor had to submit to an inquiry into his nobility and blood purity. He summoned witnesses in Madrid in September 1606 to attest to his legitimate birth and the reputation of his ancestors. The witnesses' responses to the questionnaire he presented—a standard part of applying to join the military orders—emphasized how Indigenous peoples possessed blood purity despite being considered recent converts to Christianity. They reveal much about the narrative that petitioners needed to produce in order to be granted honours and prestigious positions.

47. Archivo Histórico Nacional [hereinafter AHN], OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 4081, 4r. On Melchor Carlos Inca and native Andean petitioners at the Spanish royal court, see De la Puente Luna, *Andean Cosmopolitans*.

48. Juan Ossio A., "Algunos detalles sugerentes sobre los privilegios de las esposas del Inca según la probanza de Don Cristóbal Paullo Ynga," in *La Descendencia de Don Cristóbal Paullo Ynga y sus Privilegios: Documentos de probanza y testamentos del siglo XVI-XVII*, ed. Donato Amado Gonzales (Lima: Biblioteca Nacional del Perú 2016), 13–25. See also Sara Vicuña Guengerich, "Capac Women and the Politics of Marriage in Early Colonial Peru," *Colonial Latin American Review* 24.2 (2015): 147–67.

One of the witnesses was Gaspar Centurión, doctor in theology, chaplain of the king, and archdeacon of Quito's cathedral, who had resided in the Peruvian viceroyalty for thirty-eight years and who knew Melchor's parents. Centurión confirmed the legitimate birth of all members of the family:

Because this witness has sought with curiosity to know this descendance, he knows it to be true that [...] Paullo Topa Inca was the last of four sons that Huayna Capac had, who was married to his sister in his natural law before the Spaniards entered that land and won it, because it was the custom in those kingdoms for kings to marry their sisters so the line of succession would not leave their House.⁴⁹

Furthermore, Paullo Topa Inca "wore the red fringe (*borla colorada*) which was the insignia of the kings of that kingdom." Centurión knew this "because he read it in the original title that the emperor Charles V granted them [...] and he also granted [Paullo Inca] the black eagle of his arms so that the said Paullo Topa Inca could use it in his [coat of arms]."⁵⁰

Centurión testified in support of the family's blood purity, a prerequisite for nobility: they were considered to be

well-known knights (*caballeros hijosdalgo*) who were clean of all bad race (*raza*) of Muslims, Jews, and converts, without this touching them in any degree however remote. [...] And regarding blood purity, this does not apply to the native inhabitants (*naturales*) of that land, and they cannot possess bad *raza* because it is not present in that land.⁵¹

Centurión's implication that there were no Muslims, Jews, conversos, or Moriscos in the Americas presented a convenient fiction for Indigenous petitioners. Concerns with religious purity led to restrictions on travel to

49. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 4081, 16r.

50. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 4081, 16r.

51. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 4081, 16r. "cavalleros hijosdalgo notorios y limpios de toda mala raça de moro judio ni converso sin tocarlos en ningun grado por remoto y apartado que sea...por la parte paterna es decendiente derechamente por via de varon de los Reyes del Piru cuya nobleça es notoria y en lo de la linpieça a los naturales de aquella tierra no les toca ni puede tocar mala raça por no averla en aquella tierra."

Spanish America. Only individuals who could prove that all their ancestors had been Christian were allowed to emigrate, yet conversos and Moriscos found ways to evade the restrictions and they also settled in the Americas.⁵²

Melchor Carlos Inca presented a detailed account of his ancestors' service to the crown and reputation for having royal ancestry. His petition emphasized the importance of the word "coya," attached to his great-grandmother Anascolque's name, which he translated as "queen": "and she was called Coya which was the name of a Queen that was given to the legitimate wives of the Incas."⁵³ Like Pedro de Granada Venegas, Melchor stressed the voluntary conversion and alliance that Paullo Inca had forged with the Spaniards:

because my grandfather was the son of the said Huayna Capac and because of the great and notable services rendered to the Royal Crown of Castile at the beginning of the conquest and discovery [...] he helped them and favored them with the great [...] power that he had with his people (*naturales*), against the opinion of his brothers who were also sons of the same Huayna Capac.⁵⁴

Melchor stated that the encomienda granted to Paullo Inca for his loyal service was passed down to his son Carlos Inca but then reverted to the crown as did the encomiendas granted to Spaniards. Melchor quickly differentiated himself from the Spanish owners by emphasizing his status as the descendant of monarchs: "my grandfather, who by being of a different status and dignity (*grandeza*) should receive different satisfaction. The said encomienda should be perpetual for him and his descendants because it was not only granted for his services but for his status as a son of the lord of this kingdom."⁵⁵ In April 1607, Melchor's petition was approved and he was granted the habit of the Order of Santiago. This was the same year that Pedro de Granada Venegas received his habit of the Order of Alcántara. Melchor's son Juan Melchor Carlos Inca continued to petition at the Spanish court into the 1620s for further favours.

52. Cook, *Forbidden Passages*.

53. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 4081, 42r.

54. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 4081, 40r.

55. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 4081, 40v.

The descendants of Moctezuma were also active at the royal court during the early seventeenth century, a period that saw an increase in petitions for nobility.⁵⁶ Among the families who sought royal favours during the first decades in the form of titles and entailed estates, appointments as courtiers, and entry into the military orders, we see continued petitioning on the part of the Morisco and Indigenous nobility. Pedro Tesifón Moctezuma's petition to the monarch and Council of Orders for entry into a military order coincided with the efforts of Pedro de Granada Venegas and Melchor Carlos Inca. In August 1612, Philip III ordered the officials of the council to approve the entry of Tesifón Moctezuma into the Order of Santiago.⁵⁷ His title of knight (*título de habito*) was approved one year later in August 1613. Before its approval, the Council of Orders had to review Pedro's genealogy and summon witnesses who had lived in New Spain who could testify to the importance of the Moctezuma lineage. Both his maternal and paternal lines had to be scrutinized, "until they connected with Moctezuma, king of Mexico."⁵⁸ The opening folio of Pedro's file displayed his hereditary title of Count and Lord of the Provinces of Tula in New Spain, and his birthplace was listed as Guadix in Andalucía. His father Diego Luis de Moctezuma, Count and Lord of Tula, was born in Mexico, and his mother Francisca de la Cueva was born in Madrid where she served as a lady-in-waiting of the queen.⁵⁹ While his maternal grandparents were not mentioned, his paternal grandparents figured prominently: Pedro Moctezuma, "Count and Lord of the Provinces of Tula, hereditary Prince of Moctezuma who had been Emperor and Lord of New Spain" and the Lady Catalina Quiasuichil.⁶⁰

The first witness to testify, the Augustinian friar Manuel de Villegas y Peralta, invoked his authority as the son of one of the first conquerors of Mexico. He heard his father and elders refer to the emperor Moctezuma's son as Prince

56. On the descendants of Moctezuma, see Chipman, *Moctezuma's Children*. See also Francisco L. Jiménez Abollado, "Don Diego Luis Moctezuma, nieto de Hueytlatoni, padre de conde: un noble indígena entre dos mundos," *Anuario de Estudios Americanos* 65.1 (2008): 49–70; and "Mercedes y privilegios para consolidar un mayorazgo indiano: De Don Pedro Moctezuma Tlachahuepantzin a Don Pedro Tesifón Moctezuma, Primer Conde de Moctezuma (1569–1639)," *Boletín Americanista* 63 (2011): 189–210; and Johnson, *Cultural Hierarchy in Sixteenth-Century Europe*, 83–92.

57. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 5588 (image 8).

58. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 5588 (image 13).

59. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 5588 (image 10).

60. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 5588 (image 10).

Don Pedro: “this is what they called him in that kingdom generally because he was the eldest legitimate son who remained of the emperor Moctezuma, and he inherited the kingdom because he was born to the queen of Tula.”⁶¹ Villegas y Peralta continued,

because the said emperor gave his kingdom to Your Majesty, the said Prince Don Pedro ceased to possess it [...] This witness heard everyone in Mexico lament that being so great a prince, he was not given the great favours that corresponded to him as such, although some said that it was not done because he never wanted to come to Spain when called by His Majesty to make him a great lord, and his son came, the count.⁶²

While Villegas y Peralta never met Pedro Tesifón Moctezuma’s parents, he had heard that his grandmother was “a great lady of the same house as the kings of Tula.”⁶³ Furthermore, when Pedro’s father finally travelled to the royal court, the king “honoured him with favours and married him to the said Francisca de la Cueva, granddaughter of the Dukes of Alburquerque and a lady-in-waiting, whom this witness knew by sight [...] for her great bloodline.”⁶⁴ Pedro’s forebears were universally known for their high lineage: “no one ignores them for their notoriety because [...] Pedro] is the descendant of kings, newly converted among gentiles [*reyes nuevamente convertidos de la gentilidad*].”⁶⁵

The next witness was the Augustinian friar Juan Zapata de Sandoval who had known Pedro’s father, Diego Luis Moctezuma, at the royal court:

he had spoken and dealt with him in the city of Valladolid when the court was there, and he heard it was public and notorious that he was born in the city of Mexico [...] and in his figure [*talle*] and colour it was seen that he was by birth an Indian [*yndio de naçion*].⁶⁶

61. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 5588 (image 14).

62. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 5588 (image 14).

63. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 5588 (image 14).

64. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 5588 (image 14).

65. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 5588 (images 14–15).

66. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 5588 (image 15): “y en el talle y color se le hechava bien de ber que hera yndio de naçion.”

Zapata de Sandoval described how Diego had to litigate in Spain to be recognized as the heir of the Aztec emperor and receive royal favours, despite his high status being well-known in Mexico. Even with the monarch's favour, Diego would have encountered prejudice at the royal court and had to work doubly to have his nobility publicly acknowledged. In the context of the evidentiary documents, or *probanzas*, references to his physical appearance as well as the newly converted status of his forebears posed additional obstacles that needed to be addressed, potentially delaying a favourable decision.⁶⁷ Diego's stay in Valladolid coincided with that of Pedro de Granada Venegas, whose ancestor was also overlooked for entry into the highest ranks of the nobility.⁶⁸

To establish a reputation as noble, claimants not only had to commission genealogies that would prove their illustrious lineages, but they also had to represent themselves publicly engaging in activities associated with the nobility. The references to good horsemanship, jousting, and bullfighting in the chronicles of Miguel Venegas de Granada and Andrés de Almansa y Mendoza are one example, as are the witnesses in the *probanzas* who mentioned how each applicant performed on horseback. Zapata de Sandoval described Tesifón Moctezuma as a "good horseman," and Villegas y Peralta concluded that he was a "very good knight who often rode on horseback."⁶⁹ By appearing in Almansa y Mendoza's chronicle as someone whose "imperial blood" transformed him into a powerful bullfighter, Pedro's image was cemented as someone whose skill at courtly games complemented his illustrious lineage, rendering him suitable for high honours. Because his actions also mattered in proving his reputation as noble, the witnesses in Melchor Carlos Inca's *probanza* similarly testified

67. Historians have debated the meanings that references to "colour" had prior to the late eighteenth century, when used in the context of ideas about race. Associated with complexion as it pertains to humoral theory, colour had a broader range of meanings beyond skin tone. While more fluid than in later periods, ideas about colour and complexion as they related to concepts such as race (*raza*) and blood purity could nonetheless restrict social mobility. See Max S. Hering Torres, María Elena Martínez, and David Nirenberg, eds., *Race and Blood in the Iberian World* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2013); Miriam Eliav-Feldon, Benjamin Isaac, and Joseph Ziegler, eds., *The Origins of Racism in the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Martínez, *Genealogical Fictions*.

68. For more on the efforts of Don Diego to secure the promised *mercedes* from Philip II and then Philip III, see Jiménez Abollado, "Don Diego Luis Moctezuma."

69. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 5588 (images 15–16).

to his horsemanship and participation as a “very valiant knight” in jousts and bullfights.⁷⁰ Performances of nobility at court, and their representation in printed texts, helped bolster the case for the rewards that each ultimately received.

Conclusion

Recent scholarship on the early modern Iberian world has highlighted the role that petitioning played in shaping laws and policies from the ground up, and it has emphasized the fluidity of socioracial categories that were in the process of being constructed through the initiatives of individuals who lived in colonial contexts and who actively used legal mechanisms to respond to the challenges facing them and their communities. Such initiatives enabled the participation of local groups within the Iberian kingdoms through direct appeal to the monarch for rights, favours, and rewards. This article aimed to explore the tension between the official discourses concerning relationships of vassalage and incorporation into the larger political community of the Spanish Monarchy, and local practices of claiming status that marshalled arguments about nobility and blood purity, at times successfully, to bolster the position of some individuals or groups but with the consequence of excluding other social groups from access to land and privileges over the longer term.

In theory, the residents of the multiple Spanish kingdoms were vassals who could petition the crown for rights. The reality was often very different. Ideas about the inheritance of qualities such as loyalty and nobility, and their association with blood purity and religious belief, played a role in the long-term creation of social hierarchies and structural inequalities that established distinctions between the status of the residents of the various kingdoms of the Spanish Monarchy. One reason for these differing trajectories may lie in the reality of “conquest,” something that the kingdoms of Granada, New Spain, and Peru shared, which immediately established a subordinate status of vassals who were new converts—whose loyalty needed to be constantly proven, and was never a given. By the sixteenth century, individuals who had non-Christian ancestors could be regarded as potentially disloyal subjects, with the exception

70. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 4081, 13r. On the significance of jousts or *juegos de cañas* for the Spanish nobility, see Barbara Fuchs, *Exotic Nation: Maurophilia and the Construction of Early Modern Spain* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009), dx.doi.org/10.9783/9780812207354.

of the emerging nobility (Morisco, Inca, Mexico) who were able to establish through numerous *probanzas* both their ancient lineage and ties to Christianity, as well as their loyal service to the crown.

From the arrival of the Spaniards in the Andes, the category of “Inca” as distinct from the Spanish term “indio” (Indian) was in the process of being constructed to reflect the ruling status of the Inca elites who bolstered their descendants’ claims to nobility. Printed histories as well as the oral testimonies of witnesses in court cases engaged with defining what it meant to be Inca. The results would have political consequences. In 1579, Manso Sierra de Leguizamo testified on behalf of the Cusco Incas who were collecting evidence for their petition to remain exempt from forced labour (*servicios personales*).⁷¹ Sierra de Leguizamo stated that in Peru “to say Inca is like saying in Spain well-known knights, and lords of vassals, dukes and counts and other lords of this rank. The said Incas were lords of this kingdom and they conquered Chile and Quito and beyond, and as absolute lords they were given labour and tribute.”⁷² How the Spanish terms *reyes* (kings), *coyas* (queens), *señores naturales* (local lords), *caballeros* (knights), and *incas* (Incas) were being defined and invoked in each petition and court case reveals subtle differences in each family’s use of Inca history to bolster their application or undermine an opponent’s claim. Chronicles and histories being written in the period were in dialogue with the paperwork deployed in the courtroom and at court. Inca came to be defined as a distinct category from the majority of the native Andean population, to indicate royal ancestry and contemporary nobility, in contrast to the category of Morisco that became a label more generally applied in exclusionary discourses.⁷³

After receiving their titles and favours, many of the Indigenous, mestizo, and Morisco petitioners remained close to the royal court. By the early seventeenth century, the Granada Venegas household was based in Madrid despite the family’s ties to Granada. Beatriz Clara Coya’s daughter Ana María de Loyola Coya was granted the marquisate of Oropesa in 1614. She married Juan Enríquez de Borja, of a prominent Spanish noble family, and they spent most of their lives in Spain. When Beatriz’s grandson, Juan Enríquez de Borja y Almansa, applied to enter the Order of Santiago, assessors in 1628 ruled in his favour, recognizing the blood purity of his ancestors:

71. AGI, Lima 472, N. 4, 98r.

72. AGI, Lima 472, N. 4, 98r.

73. On Morisco as a legal category, see Cook, *Forbidden Passages*.

his maternal grandmother Doña Beatriz Clara Coya was the granddaughter and descendent of the ancient Inca kings of Peru. [...] Although she is the descendant of converts to our Holy Catholic faith, because she is of the lineage of kings and also of gentiles (*gentilidad*) she is worthy of all honour as is her grandson.⁷⁴

Furthermore, “many say that the Royal Council of Orders have dispatched the habits of other Inca knights who are not as closely descended from the kings of Peru” as he is.⁷⁵ Melchor Carlos Inca died in Alcalá de Henares in 1610 and his son Juan Melchor Carlos Inca continued to request favours at the royal court. He was among the Inca descendants exiled to Spain from Cusco by Viceroy Toledo, who feared his presence in Peru could spark a rebellion among native Andeans who continued to recognize his royal lineage and might crown him the next Inca.⁷⁶ When the Marquis of Oropesa travelled to Peru in 1618 to visit his estates, he requested the viceroy Francisco de Borja y Aragón, Prince of Esquilache, to grant him jurisdiction over the Indians of his *repartimiento*, presenting a royal decree in his favour. Following the policy set by Viceroy Toledo regarding Melchor and the other Inca descendants, the Prince of Esquilache determined that it would be “highly inconvenient for any descendant of the Inca to establish himself in this kingdom, particularly the children and grandchildren of the Marquis of Oropesa who so immediately represent the line of succession.”⁷⁷ The lands belonging to the marquisate were among the “best, the richest and most populous” in Peru, located between Cusco and La Paz “where the memory of the Inca is most alive.”⁷⁸ In contrast to royal initiatives arranged in Madrid on behalf of the Inca descendants, the viceroy

74. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 2631 (images 82–83). Juan Enríquez de Borja y Almansa inherited the titles of Marquis of Oropesa from his mother, and Marquis of Alcañizes from his cousin. He married the daughter of the Duke of Alburquerque, Ana de la Cueva y Enríquez.

75. AHN, OOMM, Caballeros-Santiago, exp. 2631 (images 82–83).

76. On Spanish officials’ anxieties about the potential return of the Inca and the exile of Inca descendants from Cusco see Donato Amado Gonzales, “Los privilegios de los descendientes de Don Cristóbal Paullo Inca,” in Amado Gonzales, ed., *La descendencia de Don Cristóbal Paullo Ynga y sus privilegios* (Lima: Biblioteca Nacional del Perú, 2016), 27–72; De la Puente Luna, *Andean Cosmopolitans*.

77. Letter of the Prince of Esquilache dated Lima, 16 April 1618, cited in Rubén Vargas Ugarte, S. J., *Historia General del Perú. Virreinato (1596–1689)* (Lima: Carlos Milla Batres, 1981), 173.

78. Letter of the Prince of Esquilache, cited in Vargas Ugarte, 173.

and Spanish officials based at the viceregal court feared the revolutionary potential of the return of the descendants and heirs of Huayna Capac to Peru.⁷⁹

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