

**HISTORY**

# Teachers, Folklore, and the Crafting of *Serrano* Cultural Identity in Peru

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This article examines two cases of folklorization led by teachers in Peru between 1939 and 1971, and characterized by the participation of the indigenous and mestizo subjects whose local cultures were transformed into folklore. These cases show teachers as active agents of cultural change in Andean schools, who were responding to de-Indianization by promoting a *serrano* (pertaining to the Sierra) regional identity among their students. In this fashion, teachers were reinventing “local traditions” to produce a new popular identity based on a common regional bond, through which indigenous and mestizo populations could negotiate new waves of cultural interaction with modernity and national society. The first case analyzes the projects of José María Arguedas and Emilio Barrantes to bring local folklore to the school curriculum and to promote an Andean popular culture. The second case explores school folklore competitions organized autonomously by provincial teachers, in which traditional dances were folklorized and turned into a popular spectacle. While framing both folklorization cases within the study of teachers as local intellectuals, the article also highlights the importance of a magisterial culture in Peru that, drawing from the progressive education movement, viewed teachers as agents of sociocultural change and nationalism.

Este artículo estudia dos casos de folklorización realizados por maestros peruanos entre 1939 y 1971, y caracterizados por la participación de los individuos indígenas y mestizos cuyas culturas estaban siendo transformadas en folclor. Estos casos muestran a los maestros como agentes activos de cambio cultural en las escuelas andinas, respondiendo a la *desindianización* al promover una identidad regional serrana entre los estudiantes. De tal manera, los maestros estaban reinventando las tradiciones locales con el fin de producir una nueva identidad popular basada en un vínculo regional común, y a través de la cual las poblaciones indígenas y mestizas pudieran negociar nuevas maneras de interacción cultural con la modernidad y la sociedad nacional. El primer caso analiza los proyectos de José María Arguedas y Emilio Barrantes para integrar el folclor local en el currículo escolar. El segundo explora los concursos folklóricos escolares organizados por maestros provinciales, en los cuales las danzas tradicionales eran folklorizadas y convertidas en espectáculo popular. Aunque ambos casos de folklorización se enmarcan en el estudio de los maestros como intelectuales locales, este artículo también subraya la importancia de una cultura magisterial en el Perú que, influenciada por el movimiento de la Escuela Nueva, concibió a los maestros como agentes de cambio sociocultural y de nacionalismo.

**Introduction**

Studies on Peruvian education have widely explored various institutional, sociological, and cultural aspects of its history during the twentieth century. Scholars have examined education reforms and the role of the educational system in state-building (Paulston 1971; Contreras 2004; Oliart 2011; Espinoza 2013); the interplay of education, rural societies, and the state; and the impact of education on ethnicity, oral cultures, and gender (Alberti and Cotler 1972; Ansión 1988; Ames 2002; Zavala 2002; Degregori 2014), as well as the effect that greater access to schooling had in the development of *indigenismo*, regional history, and national identity (Hazen 1974; Portocarrero and Oliart 1989; Salomon and Chambi 2006; Velásquez Garambel 2011).

Some studies have specifically focused on Peruvian teachers, their organizations, and the constitution of a magisterial culture over the past century (Pezo, Ballón, and Peirano 1978; Tovar 1994). Along these lines, Matthias vom Hau (2009) has recently examined schoolteachers' political and cultural agency during Juan Velasco Alvarado's government, and in particular, their refusal to adopt the cultural nationalism advocated by official textbooks. Vom Hau aligns with recent studies on Latin American education that stress the importance of analyzing teachers as intellectuals who constantly negotiate between local societies and the state (Vaughan 1997; Rockwell 1994, 2007). That is to say, schoolteachers are not mere replicators of state-sponsored ideologies, but intellectuals who reinterpret said ideologies at different levels.<sup>1</sup>

Using this approach to teachers as a starting point, this article delves into an aspect of Peru's recent cultural history that has been understudied: the active role teachers played in the creation of new cultural identities through folklore in response to the impact of modernization. Among other consequences—the expansion of roads, urbanization, immigration, schooling—since the 1900s *desindianización* (de-Indianization) in Andean societies has accelerated, producing a distancing of indigenous and mestizo populations from the stereotypical image of the *indio*: illiterate, monolingual, peasant, and with a rural culture.<sup>2</sup> As Julio Cotler (1994) notes, education functioned as a “conversion mechanism” that transformed *indios* into *mestizos* and reinforced the latter's efforts to identify with the culture of the masters (*señores*). This phenomenon became particularly apparent starting in the 1940s, when, as Carlos Contreras (2004, 214–215) observes, the presence of an “army of teachers” in rural provinces began to challenge the “*sociedad de señores e indios*.” Teachers in Andean societies were key actors in this process, as their role as state educators reproduced *desindianización* by providing younger generations the opportunity to acquire certain skills (Spanish, reading, and writing) and values associated with a modern and urban national culture. The teachers studied in this article accepted this state-sanctioned role as promoters of modernity in Andean societies but at the same time reinterpreted it through the use of folklore to reimagine what cultural modernity could mean for those societies. In doing so, they did not reject modernity or *desindianización* but sought to redirect some of their cultural outcomes through the folklorization of the traditional indigenous and mestizo cultures that were “in peril.” As I argue here, by transforming these cultures into folklore, teachers promoted among students and their families a *serrano* cultural identity (pertaining to the people of the Sierra) that rested on a common regional bond and that offered *serranos* a cohesive cultural unit for negotiating their cultural interactions with modernity and national society.<sup>3</sup>

In this article *folklorization* refers to the process by which certain forms of local cultures were conceptualized and promoted as folklore. This concept emphasizes the fact that folklore is a constructed notion or an “invented tradition” (Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983), the result of selecting, manipulating, and combining aspects of a traditional (rural or urban) culture with elements of other cultures. Transformed into folklore, local cultures acquired new status and value as “art.” Nevertheless, folklore was not just the result of “a plain and simple manipulation and stylization,” but also a space where different social and cultural groups convened and where identity disputes were settled (Mendoza 2008, 6–8). It follows that the direction folklorization took and its outcomes largely depended on the intentions of the individuals who promoted it. As Zoila Mendoza (2008, 4) has argued, since the early 1900s folklorization helped Latin American elites “foster a regional identity and derive from it a national identity.” For instance, one could highlight folklorization's fundamental role in the creation of the ideal Indian of *indigenismo* (Dawson 1998) or its use in state building (Rowe and Schelling 1991; Earle 2007). Mendoza has particularly studied folklorization processes carried out in Cuzco between the 1920s and the 1950s, a moment also characterized by “neo-Indianism” (de la Cadena 2000; Poole 1997). In this period, radical *indigenismo* was gradually being replaced by *mestizaje*, a shift that would eventually lead to a debate (and corresponding intellectual projects) on cultural miscegenation and national integration. Even though the instances of folklorization examined here run from 1939 until 1971, they also take part in this context.

<sup>1</sup> This kind of analysis, in turn, is part of a larger ongoing discussion concerning education and its social function, which seeks to transform the dominant view of education as a monolithic ideological flash point of the ruling elites to conceiving it as an arena of intense negotiation between teachers, students, local communities, and the state (Vaughan 1997; Rockwell 1994; Rockwell 2007; Gustafson 2009; García 2005; Wilson 2013).

<sup>2</sup> While *desindianización* has accompanied the history of Andean societies since colonial times, the specific dynamics of modernization in the twentieth century created a new context for it, as Peru transformed from a rural to an urban country (Cotler 1994; Alberti and Cotler 1972; García 2005).

<sup>3</sup> Of course, regional identity and regionalism did not originate in the twentieth century; they were present in Andean societies long before independence. What I mean by the promotion of a regional *serrano* identity is the localization of old ideas in a new, specific context, that of schooling in the twentieth century. For twentieth-century regionalism in Peru, see Deustua and Rénique (1984).

This article presents two cases of the use of folklorization by Peruvian teachers. The first centers on the work of two young schoolteachers in the Andean cities of Sicuani and Huancayo, who from 1939 to 1941 independently took on similar projects organizing their students to gather oral traditions, customs, and songs from their communities. These teachers are José María Arguedas (1911–1969), who would later become a renowned literary author and anthropologist, and Emilio Barrantes (1903–2007), who would subsequently become a university professor and education policy maker. The second instance of folklorization was carried out starting in 1948 by teachers in the southern and central Andes, who organized *concursos folklóricos* (folklore competitions) in schools. These concursos continued as autonomously organized events until around 1971, when the Peruvian nationalist revolution of Velasco Alvarado incorporated them into the national education policy, effectively appropriating them as a tool to promote official nationalism, and thus radically transforming them.<sup>4</sup> Before analyzing these cases in detail, I offer a general characterization of Peruvian teachers as an intellectual group from 1905 until the leftist radicalization of a large portion of educators during the 1960s. A significant aspect of this characterization centers on the constitution and dissemination of a *normalista* magisterial culture, which rested on a vision of teachers as agents of sociocultural change and incentivized them to work closely with parents and local communities.

## Teachers

Throughout Peruvian history, the ruling elites have favored education as a central program for modernizing and Europeanizing the country. During the twentieth century, as Contreras (2004, 216–220) has discussed, state education followed fundamentally two intellectual projects: the *civilista* (implemented during the first two decades of the century) and the *indigenista* (from the late 1930s to the 1960s). Despite their differences, both projects focused on literacy as a means to integrate the indigenous population to the nation-state. Although changes in government affected state education policies, education continued to be perceived and promoted as a fundamental tool for state formation until the end of the 1960s. This resulted in a rapid expansion of schooling during this period, which in turn required an equivalent increase in the number of teachers fit to work in the new schools that were being built all over the nation, and particularly in the Sierra.

Until the turn of the nineteenth century, the majority of Peruvian teachers possessed only primary or secondary education. Likewise, it was common for a person to receive a teaching position in return for a political favor, regardless of his or her professional training. This tendency began to fade gradually with the creation and restructuring of *escuelas normales* (teachers' colleges) in Lima (and later in provincial cities). Since the foundation of the Escuela Normal de Varones de Lima (ENVL) in 1905, the majority of future normalistas came from provincial, middle-class origins, principally from Andean cities and towns. This tendency can be explained by the expansion of the lettered city (Rama 1984) and the diversification of intellectual work produced by modernization since the end of the 1800s. As a result, newer generations that had gained access to education started to occupy different positions in the state apparatus, as well as in journalism and other liberal professions. However, education was perhaps the most accessible way to enter the realm of the lettered city for most young men of provincial origins. The majority were unable to become professional writers—the most coveted figure throughout the twentieth century—or diplomats, but they could still pursue their intellectual interests as teachers, a profession that, at the time, provided an honorable salary and a certain degree of prestige.<sup>5</sup> After graduating from the *escuela normal*, some normalistas moved on to positions at the Education Ministry, working on the design of national education policies; others became *inspectores provinciales de educación* (provincial education inspectors), overseeing the implementation of these policies at a regional level,<sup>6</sup> and others went on to work at provincial or district schools as principals and schoolteachers. A large number of *normalistas provincianos* returned to their hometowns or surrounding regions.

Thus, the establishment of the ENVL marked the beginning of teachers' professionalization, frequently expressed as a demand from teachers for more autonomy from government influences. ENVL also incentivized among normalistas the socialization of knowledge and professional, ethical, and political values, a dynamic that paved the way for the constitution of a magisterial culture. Any attempt to offer a cohesive description

<sup>4</sup> While discussing education reforms in Peru during the twentieth century, Patricia Oliart (2011, 46) notes that Velasco Alvarado's government officially incorporated folklore competitions to the school curriculum.

<sup>5</sup> Progressively, beginning in the 1950s, teaching stopped being associated with the middle class, and became a profession of the lower classes. This dynamic is tied to the progressive democratization of education and the creation of *escuelas normales* in provincial cities, which granted greater access to the profession to the children of peasants and workers (Pezo, Ballón, and Peirano 1978; Tovar 1994).

<sup>6</sup> See the section titled "Folklore Competitions" for more details on provincial education inspectors.

of this magisterial culture is bound to come up short, as it must take into account a set of social, cultural, and political components that varied significantly over time. For instance, from 1930 to 1956, the Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana (APRA) political party exerted great influence on Peruvian teachers, especially those in coastal and Andean cities.<sup>7</sup> Yet, after 1956 the influence of Marxism radicalized the political posture of a sector of educators (Pezo, Ballón, and Peirano 1978, 105–108).<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, the teachers studied in this article do not seem influenced by APRA's or Marxist ideology. Instead, they seem to be responding to their identification as normalistas. As such, they prioritized engaging in pedagogical debates among their peers or within state education institutions over vindicating a political affiliation to a party.

For this reason, despite the aforementioned degree of variability, it is possible to isolate three key principles that informed normalista magisterial culture between 1905 and the 1960s: (1) to align the learning experience with the students' local reality and to integrate all members of the community (e.g., parents, relatives, neighbors) into the teaching process; (2) to view schools as engines of local progress, and thus as not limited to transmitting traditional knowledge (e.g., Spanish, literacy, mathematics); and (3) to foment an understanding of teachers as agents of sociocultural change and, in particular, as key figures in fostering a nationalist sentiment among the country's popular sectors. During the period, these three principles were rooted in the progressive education movement that spread worldwide since the late nineteenth century. The terms *new school* and *active pedagogy* were frequently used to refer to this pedagogical trend, as a way to underscore their contrast with the abstract and memory-reliant teaching philosophy of "traditional" schooling. The most recognizable figure connected to this movement was the pragmatist philosopher John Dewey, who widely influenced Latin American education debates and practices (Bruno-Jofré and Schriewer 2012).

*Escuelas normales* were an avenue for introducing these pedagogical ideas to Peruvian teachers, as foreign educators frequently visited and worked in them. For example, the first director of the ENVL was the Belgian Isidore Poiry, who made a point of putting future teachers in contact with various education theories.<sup>9</sup> Another emblematic example of the influence of the new school movement on the normalistas is Joseph Alden MacKnight, who had studied at the Teachers College of Columbia University, where Dewey was a professor. MacKnight served as education inspector in Puno and later as director of ENVL between 1911 and 1915. In addition to the influx of foreign educators, Peruvian normalistas traveled to the United States and Mexico in education missions sponsored by the Peruvian government to observe the rural education practices implemented in those countries.<sup>10</sup>

Outside the halls and classrooms of the *escuelas normales*, these new pedagogical ideas were also disseminated through various means created by normalistas: talks and lectures, conferences, teacher trainings, and education journals. An early example of the latter was *La Escuela Moderna* (1911–1915), a journal edited by MacKnight during his tenure as ENVL director. Between 1940 and the end of the 1960s, the number of education journals grew exponentially, especially the ones published by provincial teachers' associations. For the Junín region—from where the cases analyzed in this article also come—one could offer two examples: *Magisterio* (Jauja Teachers' Association, 1934–1946) and *El Maestro* (Huancayo Teachers' Association, 1940–1949).<sup>11</sup>

Another component that complemented the normalistas' understanding of their teaching practices was a sense of identification with a regional, *provinciano* cultural identity. As José Deustua and José Luis Rénique (1984) have discussed, Peruvian intellectual history in the early twentieth century was marked by the growing influence of regionalism. Regionalist positions were based on the rejection of Lima's social,

<sup>7</sup> Several studies have explored APRA's role in the formation of a magisterial culture. In their collective volume on Peruvian education, César Pezo del Pino, Eduardo Ballón, and Luis Peirano (1978, 105) reconstruct the reach of said political influence, mainly concentrated in urban spaces. Although APRA's anti-oligarchic and anti-imperialist stances had great impact among urban middle classes and workers, these authors acknowledge that the ideological inclination of the magisterial culture cannot be attributed solely to this party's influence, since debates among teachers regarding their social function predate the emergence of the APRA as a political force in 1930 (107).

<sup>8</sup> The rise to power of Velasco Alvarado's nationalist regime led many teachers—especially those who had joined the Sindicato Único de Trabajadores de la Educación del Perú (SUTEP)—to adopt more radical positions.

<sup>9</sup> For a history of *escuelas normales*, see Paulston (1971) and Mac-Lean (1944).

<sup>10</sup> Records show that the practice of sending future normalistas on these education missions began with the first graduating class of ENVL. See Resolución Suprema No. 801 (Washburn 1908, 29–30). This practice continued until the end of the 1960s, when US-Peru education cooperation stopped (Paulston 1971, 76–80).

<sup>11</sup> In addition, because normalistas typically occupied positions of authority within provincial education systems, their pedagogical culture also came to influence teachers who did not have formal training. For examples of this dynamic, as well as lectures and trainings, see the journals mentioned in the main text.

economic, and cultural centralism, which patronized provinces, excluding them from the decision-making process, and denigrated their provincial societies—considered mostly rural and less modern. For normalistas born or working in Andean provinces, this regional identification took the form of a serrano cultural identity. Perhaps the best explanation for the adoption of this serrano identity is offered by José Antonio Encinas ([1932] 1959) in his book *Un ensayo de escuela nueva en el Perú*. Encinas was a graduate of ENVL, worked with MacKnight in Puno, and was very influential on the members of the renowned Orkopata group.<sup>12</sup> In his *Ensayo*, Encinas emphasizes that young men from the Andes converged in the *escuelas normales*, becoming acquainted with the similar sociocultural realities of other provinces in the region, and thus reaffirming a sense of serrano identity. Encinas even suggests a connection between this serrano cultural identity and a tradition of *liberalismo serrano* (Sierra liberalism) critical of the centralized state and the power possessed by *gamonales* in the Sierra. According to Encinas (29–58), this Sierra liberalism made teachers true advocates of sociocultural modernization as a way to overcome archaic structures and social relations in the Andes.

As part of this succinct description of the normalistas' serrano identity, the importance of indigenismo must also be noted. Indigenismo, a leading force in the exacerbation of regionalist positions during the first decades of the twentieth century, influenced generations of intellectuals, including teachers (Deustua and Rénique 1984).<sup>13</sup> In part, the serrano cultural identity that I am describing can be seen as a continuation of indigenismo's regionalist focus. However, the former transcended *lo indio* (as an isolated culture or social reality), embracing instead the diversity of indigenous and mestizo cultures in the Andes. That is to say, *serrano* for normalistas was intrinsically tied to a quest for a cohesive national identity and national integration.

In sum, normalistas' identification with both a serrano cultural identity and modernity can be understood as complementary aspects of their overall vision of their role as promoters of progress and a nationalist sentiment among the people of the Andes. I posit that this must be taken into account when analyzing the way in which the teachers discussed here engaged in creating new cultural identities through folklore in response to modernization.

## Folklore Collections

It is in the context of the expansion of education and the consolidation of a magisterial culture that we need to situate the efforts José María Arguedas and Emilio Barrantes made to bring local folklore to Andean schools starting in 1939. At the time, Arguedas was not yet a famous literary writer and anthropologist. Born in Andahuaylas (Apurímac) to a middle-class family, he had spent his formative years in Puquio and San Juan de Lucanas (Ayacucho), where he learned to speak Quechua from indigenous servants. In 1939, following an eleven-month incarceration for his participation in a university protest, Arguedas became a teacher of Spanish and geography at the recently created Colegio Nacional Mateo Pumacahua in Sicuani (Cuzco), where he would continue to work until 1941. He had not received formal training as a normalista, but throughout the 1930s he expressed interest in and exchanged ideas about education and the indigenous population with friends and other intellectuals, among them the poet and schoolteacher Manuel Moreno Jimeno and Moisés Sáenz, a leading figure in Mexican rural education.<sup>14</sup> Emilio Barrantes also had provincial middle-class origins. Born in Cajamarca, he received his teaching degree from ENVL.<sup>15</sup> After initially serving as an elementary school teacher in Tarma, in 1938 he began working as a teacher in a secondary school at the Colegio Santa Isabel in Huancayo (Junín), where he remained until 1941 (Pinilla 2013, 20).<sup>16</sup> Barrantes and Arguedas shared similar ideas on education, largely influenced by the normalistas' magisterial culture, and were proud of their serrano identity.

<sup>12</sup> See, for example, the prologue to *Un ensayo de escuela nueva en el Perú*, written by Gamaliel Churata (1959).

<sup>13</sup> In the area of education, indigenismo produced mixed results. On the one hand, *indigenistas* helped question the whitening process under way in schools nationwide through the promotion of alternative pedagogical projects, such as the *ambulante* (traveling) rural school (Vásquez 1929). On the other hand, the existence of a racist indigenismo, which envisioned schools as institutions that would "save" Indians by radically erasing all traces of their indigenous cultures, has also been documented (de la Cadena 2000; Nugent 1997; Wilson 2013).

<sup>14</sup> Sáenz visited Peru between 1931 and 1932 to do research for his monograph *El indio peruano* (1933). From 1936 to 1940 he was Mexico's ambassador to Peru. During these years, Arguedas and Sáenz exchanged ideas (see Ortiz Rescaniere 1996 for their correspondence).

<sup>15</sup> Barrantes also obtained a doctoral degree in education from the Facultad de Letras y Pedagogía of the Universidad de San Marcos in 1946.

<sup>16</sup> Coincidentally, Arguedas had studied at the Colegio Santa Isabel years before Barrantes's arrival. Barrantes stopped teaching at this school in 1941 when he was named chairperson of the Committee for Planning and Program Reform at the Education Ministry, and from that position he invited Arguedas to join the Ministry (Pinilla 2013, 13).

Although metropolitan, Sicuani and Huancayo were surrounded by, and closely linked to, rural communities. Sicuani's peripheral indigenous communities were mostly composed of Quechua speakers, albeit with a growing incidence of bilingualism (Spanish and Quechua) among younger generations. In Huancayo the indigenous and mestizo cultures from the Valley of Mantaro coexisted with modern influences, projecting an image of *transculturación* that integrated urban and rural cultures (Arguedas 1975). When Arguedas and Barrantes started teaching in their respective cities, both cities were in the throes of an intense process of modernization, the result of the installation of railroad lines (in 1890s and 1908, respectively) and the subsequent expansion of commercial activity in the region. The open exchange of material goods and cultures that characterized these cities and their peripheries intensified and expanded, resulting in populations with a high level of cultural diversity—particularly indio and mestizo cultures. This diversity extended to their student population. Progressively, schools became places of confluence, where students from heterogeneous ethnic and class backgrounds, and with varying degrees of connection to rural cultures, came together. However, this confluence of cultures precipitated a process of rapid cultural loss, as the promotion of school culture in the classrooms was accompanied by a repudiation of the students' family culture.<sup>17</sup> As Teresa Tovar (1994, 17) has observed, schools in Peru reproduced the sociocultural patterns of the urban middle and upper classes. Hence, for the popular sectors access to schooling meant learning new sociocultural norms that were divorced from the realities of their families and towns. A predominant sign of this process was the students' insistence on learning and communicating in *castellano*, a tendency that Arguedas (2012b) observed in his students in Sicuani. Another indicator was the sense of shame that cultural expressions associated with *lo indio* provoked in students with mestizo or indigenous origins. As Barrantes (1975, 59) himself explains, this negative valorization of certain components of their family culture also surfaced in the initial stages of the folklore compilation process: "It soon became clear that the majority of [my students] felt shame in writing about certain popular manifestations that were part of their own environment."<sup>18</sup> This tension between the adopted but still forced school culture and the increasingly repressed but still latent family culture encapsulates the process of desindianización that these children and their communities were experiencing.

Schools served at once as spaces for, and catalysts of, this cultural change. As teachers, Arguedas and Barrantes were in charge of this process. However, they also developed a relative autonomy to implement education practices that could influence or even redirect the outcome of that process. That was the case specifically with the folklore collections. Coinciding with the normalistas' call to adapt education to the sociocultural reality of the students, Arguedas and Barrantes sought to create teaching materials that would align with the cultural diversity of Sicuani and Huancayo. To this end, they asked their students to compile all evidence they came across of the oral traditions, customs, dances, and festivities of their families and communities. The students gathered this information in their homes and towns from their relatives—particularly their parents—and then transcribed their accounts in Spanish. Eventually, the two teachers published the fruit of their labor—Arguedas in the only issue of the journal *Pumacchahua* (Arguedas 2012c) and Barrantes in the volume *Folklore de Huancayo* (Barrantes 1940).

A fundamental objective of Arguedas's and Barrantes's folklore compilations was to promote in the students an appreciation for the cultures of their families, in response to the threat posed by desindianización. Actively engaging the students in the folklorization process was crucial to achieve this goal. In *Folklore de Huancayo*, Barrantes (2013, 38) emphasizes that the local customs and traditions gathered by the students came directly from their own communities. In other words, the folklore projects provided students with the opportunity to engage in autoethnography, to approach their own everyday cultural practices from a novel perspective that would—ideally—restore some of their value vis-à-vis school culture. The process of folklorization, however, required the separation of the students' family culture from its traditional context of production and circulation (birthday parties, religious and civic celebrations, and so on) in order to become folklore, and to be available for new pedagogical and political ends. That is, Barrantes and Arguedas used folklorization to create a new context that would assign new value to these cultures. Pedagogically, the folklore collections were intended to be made into class materials that would counteract a tendency in the few available textbooks in Andean rural schools to promote an idea of national culture as an exclusively

<sup>17</sup> In this work I use the term *family culture* to refer to the culture and knowledge shared by members of an indigenous or mestizo group. In everyday life, students experience family culture as subordinate to the one taught at school. *School culture* refers to the culture and knowledge disseminated through formal education, generally associated with modern life, science, and urban life.

<sup>18</sup> All translations in this article are mine.

urban and modern—and mostly *costeño*—imaginary, tying it to the students' cultural existence at a local level.<sup>19</sup>

With regard to the potential political uses of folklorized culture, it must be stressed that the folklorization efforts of Arguedas and Barrantes were intended as a response to the de-emphasizing of the indio identity already under way as a result of the expansion of education and modernization as a whole. In this sense, Arguedas and Barrantes viewed folklorization as a way to instill among the newer generations in the Andean regions of Peru the value of a serrano cultural identity. Evidence of the success of this can be found in the remarks made by the student Juan G. Delgado in the opening pages of *Pumacchahua*: “You will be able to observe our feelings, the reflection of our souls in these pages, because we ourselves, Indians and mestizos, inhabitants of the Sierra, have written them and will continue to write them” (Arguedas 2012c, 229).<sup>20</sup> In this passage, Delgado refers to Indians and mestizos as members of a common serrano cultural unit, to which he also belongs. This affiliation is evidence of the reversal of the dominant tendency since Republican times, by virtue of which mestizos associated with white culture, and thus avoided at all cost anything that would identify them as indios. In Delgado's words mestizos and indios come together under the umbrella of a serrano cultural identity.<sup>21</sup> Whereas modernization threatened to sever all ties between Indian and mestizo younger generations and the cultures of their elders, folklorization offered a path to reappropriate the latter, “inventing a tradition” that unified them and provided them with new value, so that serranos could proudly identify with it. Moreover, Delgado explicitly links this serrano cultural identity to his and his classmates' “alma de peruanos” (Peruvian soul). In other words, this serrano identity was the basis for the formulation of a national identity that would include Andean communities.

This serrano cultural identity is an attempt to reformulate the traditional *costeño* imaginary of the Sierra, which emphasized its lack of beauty and civilization. In contrast, *lo serrano* championed by Arguedas and Barrantes is constructed on the basis of an exaltation of the beauty of the Andean mountains, the immense bounty of agrarian landscapes, and the cultural richness of campesino societies and indigenous languages. The cover of *Folklore de Huancayo*, which features a drawing by a student named Cerrón Espejo, captures some of these features (**Figure 1**). Green cultivated fields and a road lined with trees fill both sides of the page, highlighting the value of agricultural work and a rural lifestyle. The crops depicted have been carefully planned to aesthetically converge with the pastoral vision of the town. The Andes rise majestically in the background, its slopes covered with agricultural terraces. There is a child in the forefront of the drawing, standing at the top of a stone staircase that leads to the entrance of a building—perhaps a school. The child is facing the rural landscape and holds in his lifted hand a book, a fundamental symbol of writing, school culture, and urban, modern societies. A long, winding road traverses the town and connects the mountain range with the child, as if to represent the contact—at the core of the serrano identity—between the urban world of the coast and the rural world of the Andes. Through its depiction of a landscape characterized by rural life, the drawing invites us to admire the beauty of the Sierra. Yet, it also prompts us to recognize that serrano rural life exists in contact and harmony with urban culture. The child's hand appears to be midgesture, saying either hello or good-bye to the rural panorama that stands before him. Even though this is the landscape of his youth and home, he seems detached from it, no longer belonging. One could argue that the gesture's ambiguity encapsulates the transformative and contradictory character of the cultural transition in which Arguedas's and Barrantes's students and their communities were immersed: closer than ever before to modern values, but not quite ready to let go of their traditional roots. From within this ambivalence, in the midst of this impossible choice, Arguedas and Barrantes find the context and the content for a serrano cultural identity.

Even though it transcends the scope of this article, it is important to briefly mention that years later Arguedas replicated this kind of folklorization exercise at a national level, designing and directing a National Folklore Survey in collaboration with Francisco Izquierdo Ríos.<sup>22</sup> During Luis A. Valcárcel's tenure as education minister (1945–1947), Izquierdo Ríos was named head of the ministry's Folklore Section, and Arguedas was named General Conservator of Folklore. Izquierdo Ríos (1910–1981) was a writer and

<sup>19</sup> This *costeño* imaginary is rooted in what Cecilia Méndez (1996) has called “creole nationalism,” which champions a national identity based on the European-oriented values of criollos and regards serrano cultures as inferior, backward, and resistant to progress.

<sup>20</sup> “Ustedes podrán apreciar nuestros sentimientos, el reflejo de nuestras almas en estas páginas, porque las hemos escrito y seguiremos escribiéndolas nosotros mismos, indios y mestizos, habitantes de la sierra.”

<sup>21</sup> A complex issue that emerges from this observation is the fact that this serrano cultural identity was not necessarily intended to be egalitarian in terms of class or sociocultural status. However, this transcends the scope of this article.

<sup>22</sup> I discuss the National Folklore Survey as it pertains to Arguedas's oeuvre in the book *El intelectual y la cultura de masas: Argumentos latinoamericanos en torno a Ángel Rama y José María Arguedas* (Purdue University Press, 2017).

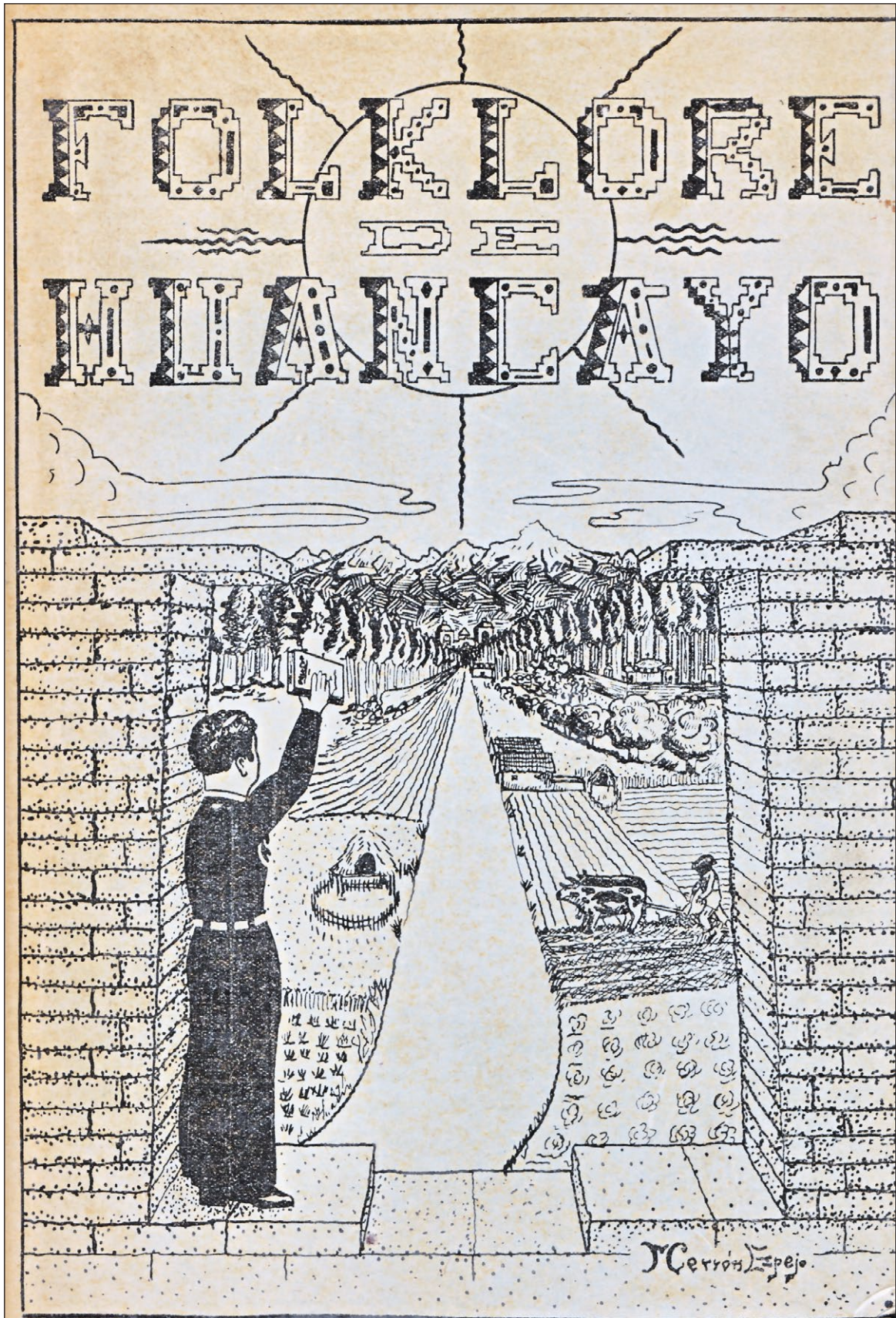


Figure 1: Cover of Folklore de Huancayo (Barrantes 1940).



normalista from the Amazonian region of Saposoa. He had served as schoolteacher and education inspector in San Martín, Amazonas, and Loreto from 1931 to 1943. Together, Izquierdo Ríos and Arguedas designed a questionnaire that was distributed to teachers in provincial schools throughout the entire country for the purpose of gathering local folklore in collaboration with their students.<sup>23</sup> The survey's objectives were to create a national folklore archive of oral traditions from the coastal, mountain, and Amazon regions, and to produce teaching aids to be used in schools throughout the nation. It elicited a massive response from provincial teachers, most of whom undertook the task with great enthusiasm (Izquierdo Ríos 1975, 311). According to Arguedas (1953, 103), the ministry received no fewer than thirty thousand responses from all over the nation, and each contained a large quantity of folklore materials: every locality that had a school—including the smallest of villages—submitted samples of songs, stories, beliefs, and, in some cases, monographs containing historical and social data. Although a selection was published in a volume titled *Mitos, leyendas y cuentos peruanos* (Arguedas and Izquierdo Ríos 1947), most of the materials never made it into any teaching materials.<sup>24</sup>

The National Folklore Survey represents a continuation of Arguedas's and Barrantes's use of folklorization as a tool to carve out a space for local cultures within national education policies. In this sense, it highlights the continued importance of this intellectual practice as a means to reformulate cultural identities and to incentivize experiences of *lo nacional* based on local and regional cultures.

### Folklore Competitions

The late 1940s—the same period when the National Folklore Survey was taking place—marked the advent of the concursos folklóricos in the schools of the central and southern regions of the Peruvian Andes. Initially, these competitions were organized by each school and featured students performing traditional dances from their region for an audience composed of their relatives and other members of their communities. Nonetheless, given their resounding success, soon similar district- and province-wide competitions were developed. In the department of Junín, for instance, the first provincial competition was held in the city of Jauja in 1948, with representatives from twenty-seven elementary schools from the city and surrounding rural areas. Within a few years, other provinces in the department followed suit and began hosting their own contests (Castro Vásquez 2000, 397; Espinosa Bravo 1967, 103). In 1956, capitalizing on the popularity of the competitions, Tarma's provincial council organized the first regional contest, which featured participants from Huancayo, Jauja, Yauli, and Tarma (Arroyo Ponce 1956). Similarly, these concursos also took hold in the department of Puno. By the 1950s, they were well established in several provinces, such as Azángaro (Luna 1983, 76–80), where they quickly gained in popularity and continued to be hosted until the end of the 1960s (Frisancho Pineda 1969). Eventually, the concursos spread throughout most of Peru's Andean region, hosted by schools as well as local governments.<sup>25</sup>

A variety of social actors were brought together by these folklore competitions, as parents and other community members helped choreograph the performances and became avid spectators of their representations. Teachers, however, played the leading role conceiving and organizing the concursos autonomously from national institutions. Although it is plausible to assume that many were directly or indirectly influenced by state-sponsored folklore initiatives, such as the National Folklore Survey, all available evidence suggests that the organizers of the folklore competitions were not following any official directive from the Education Ministry (Arguedas 1954, 7). Likewise, in the wide variety of materials examined, I have not found any evidence that would suggest that the organizers were influenced by any political party.<sup>26</sup>

For the purposes of the study of the concursos, I continue to use *teachers* as an operative keyword that refers to the totality of the organizers of these folklore competitions, even though they could be divided into two categories: *inspectores provinciales de educación*—education inspectors charged with supervising urban and rural schools in a particular province—and schoolteachers. The inspectors were imbued with

<sup>23</sup> Despite the clear correlation with Arguedas and Barrantes' folklore collections, as well as with Argentina's National Folklore Survey of 1921 (Chamosa 2010, 47–63), years after his time at the Education Ministry Izquierdo Ríos (1975, 310) argued that the idea of using teachers and students to conduct the survey came from a lack of funds assigned by the state.

<sup>24</sup> Survey materials have not been published, but a selection has been digitalized (Arguedas 2012a).

<sup>25</sup> As explained in the introduction, this section focuses on the early stages of this practice up to 1971, when the education policies set forth by Velasco Alvarado's military regime took the concursos in a different direction. Although the history of the concursos continued after this point in time, the state's appropriation transformed the teachers' agency in their organization, wherefore this new chapter of the folklore competitions deserves to be examined separately, and using different cultural production variables.

<sup>26</sup> This does not mean that teachers lacked political inclinations or affiliations to political parties. Multiple studies have shown the APRA's importance in the politicization of schoolteachers in various cities in Peru.

the normalistas' magisterial culture and the core pedagogical precepts of the "new school" (in particular, instruction adapted to local realities). Moreover, their positions of authority within the regional education framework afforded them the means and opportunity to create and promote the concursos at a provincial scale. Some members of this category were Filiberto García Cuellar (Tarma), Pedro Tumialán Achachau (Jauja), and Jorge Gutiérrez Chávez (Azángaro), to name a few. The other category comprises a great variety of schoolteachers—normalistas, *normalistas rurales*, schoolteachers without formal pedagogical training, and *auxiliares*—who were in charge of organizing the competitions at a local level.<sup>27</sup>

Despite these distinctions, I treat all teacher-organizers as a group for several reasons: first and foremost, because of their common interest in the use of folklore in schools as evidenced by their involvement with the concursos; second, for their connection to the normalista magisterial culture; and last, but equally as important, because most members of both categories had—to varying degrees—ties to the mestizo and indigenous cultures of the communities where they served, and thus, identified themselves as serranos.<sup>28</sup> Moreover, they also were united in their identification with modernity and modern values, a common thread among most teachers by the 1940s, as Fiona Wilson (2013) has observed.<sup>29</sup> However, while Wilson maintains that this identification made many teachers consider the inhabitants of the rural societies in which they worked "backward and uncultured" (161), I contend that the organizers of the concursos did not exhibit this radical disdain toward rural culture. On the contrary, I posit that the concursos should be studied as a use of folklorization that embraces cultural change and promotes the adoption of a regional cultural identity based on traditional cultures as a way of fomenting a nationalist sentiment among the population of the Andes.

While very little is known about the parents' overall assessment of the concursos, all written accounts emphasize the enthusiasm felt by all adults involved. In the case of Tarma, Gamaniel Arroyo (1956, 188) comments: "It is astonishing to see how residents of the most remote areas travel in their most attractive outfits and utilize the most diverse means of communication in order to witness the competitions carried out in district or provincial capitals, as if they were attending their most important local festivals." Likewise, Lizandro Luna (1983, 76–77) writes about the competitions in Azángaro: "The huge crowd of indigenous people, from as far away as ten leagues, couldn't miss out on this festival of vernacular art that, with its picturesqueness and emotion, monopolized the attention of the thousands of spectators." A similar tendency can be attributed to the departmental competitions in Puno, which included representatives from the provinces of Azángaro, Lampa, Carabaya, Huancané, Melgar, and San Román, among others (Frisancho Pineda 1969). The active and voluntary involvement of all members of the community in constructing a collective representation of their various traditions connects these competitions to the folklore collections of Arguedas and Barrantes.

The enthusiasm felt by parents and community members evinces a component of regional cultural pride, for through their participation in the concursos, children were establishing closer links with their local cultures and, in a way, becoming their ambassadors. Julián Loja (2015) recalls that parents in rural villages would travel from all over to the city of Tarma to attend the competitions, and if their school won, they would celebrate the triumph with great pride because their children were learning their customs in school.<sup>30</sup> As seen in the previous section, folklorization extracted everyday family culture from its traditional context and offered it back to schoolchildren, transformed into a new idea of culture.

Similarly to Arguedas and Barrantes, the organizers of the concursos envisioned their folklorization efforts as a means to expand and consolidate this serrano cultural identity by providing a new context of existence and circulation for local cultures: not a "cure" for desindianización, but an acknowledgment of the transformation ethnic identities (indio, mestizo) had undergone in the face of major socioeconomic and cultural transformations spurred by modernization, and particularly schools. This regional identity was also inextricably intertwined with an imaginary of the nation, and of the place of Andean societies

<sup>27</sup> *Normalistas rurales* refers to teachers who graduated from an *escuela normal rural* and received a training that focused on elementary education in rural societies. *Auxiliares* are teaching assistants who carried out a variety of educational tasks in schools.

<sup>28</sup> For example, Filiberto García Cuellar was born in Huarochirí in 1907. He attended elementary school in his hometown and secondary school in Lima, before entering the Instituto Nacional Pedagógico (National Pedagogical Institute). After his graduation in 1930, he worked as a schoolteacher in various Andean departments until he was appointed *inspector provincial de educación* in 1946.

<sup>29</sup> Wilson (2013, 99–118) primarily analyzes the intellectual use of two prominent folklore events in Tarma: *el baile del inca* (the dance of the Inca) and the *carnavales* (carnivals). Although the *concurso*s are another instance of an intellectual use of folklore, they are not part of the repertory analyzed by Wilson. A possible explanation is that they did not have as much visibility, and hence, did not draw the interest of the intellectuals she analyzes.

<sup>30</sup> Interview of Julián Loja by Dasha Mamani and Javier García Liendo, 2015.

within it, shared by many provincial intellectuals at the time, including the teachers in charge of the folklore competitions. Incentivizing the adoption of a serrano identity was seen as a way of reinterpreting the meaning of *peruanidad* (Peruvianness) from the perspective of Andean societies. That is, becoming *serrano* in order to become *peruano*. In the words of Clodoaldo Espinosa Bravo (1967, 103), a renowned intellectual who supported the work of schoolteachers in rural areas since the 1930s and served as jury member in several competitions in Junín, these contests and their promotion of a regional cultural identity were essential tools to achieve “national integration” and *peruanización*: “Our regionalism is not localist. . . . It [fosters] national integration.”<sup>31</sup> By means of folklorization, traditional Andean dances become valued examples of *Peruvian* culture without losing their connection to the region from which they came. Hence, being proud of one’s serrano cultural identity becomes a way to celebrate one’s Peruvianness as well.

The apparent success of the concursos in repurposing local traditions into a viable regional identity ought not to obscure the fact that these folklore competitions imposed new transformations on the cultures that served as raw material. In this case, the transition to folklore entailed not only the separation of these cultures from their organic contexts of production and circulation but, in addition, the transformation of these cultures into popular spectacles. Two aspects of this folklorization via spectacle merit particular attention: the competitive nature of the concursos and the progressive commercialization of popular culture. The latter came in various forms, one of which was the increasing importance of entry fees and prizes awarded (Espinosa Bravo 1967, 107). The competitive dimension of the concursos, however, existed from the outset. These were, after all, folklore competitions in which the various manifestations of local culture exhibited by the performances were judged by a group of “experts” who constituted the jury. Although not every region has records showing how judges were selected and the evaluation methods used, Jauja’s provincial competitions can be taken as representative in this regard (Espinosa Bravo 1967, 107–112). The education authorities of Jauja appointed schoolteachers and folklorists to serve as judges. Nonetheless, their expertise was relative, given the enormous variety of local traditions represented in the performances. For Jauja’s first provincial competition, in 1948, the judging panel had to invent four categories to score the performances of the twenty-seven groups participating—customs, regional dances, local dances, and religious practices—and within these categories they employed criteria such as merit, technical execution, costumes, and significance. Not only were these criteria vague and subjective, but they also encouraged greater theatricality and emphasized spectacle on the part of the participants. That is, the desire to win spurred a temptation to deviate from “traditional” or “authentic” forms and to propose continual reinventions of their own traditions to suit the judges’ preferences.

As concursos gained popularity, their commercialization and competitiveness progressively accelerated, to the point that in the 1980s some local intellectuals started decrying the “cultural corruption” the events were generating. For example, in his book on the folklore of Junín, Aquilino Castro Vásquez (2000, 390) observes that the competitions increasingly became spaces for the “denaturalization” of folklore, promoting “the dissemination of the dances, but uprooting them from their medium, taking them down the road of exhibitionism, commercialization, and consequently deformation.” Castro Vásquez’s assertions evince the complexity of the changes popular culture was undergoing in that period. While the concursos were certainly part of the processes that fueled these changes, what Castro Vásquez denounces as “corruption” must be evaluated as the inescapable outcome of a transformation experienced by most forms of popular culture in Latin America during the second half of the twentieth century (García Canclini 2002). Moreover, as has been stated before, the concursos never intended to preserve a static notion of Andean cultures, which were already being altered by powerful socioeconomic forces. Rather, the competitions were conceived as a means to reappropriate certain elements of those cultures as the basis for an “invented tradition” that would reformulate the modern national imaginary from the perspective of a serrano identity.

## Conclusions

Toward the end of the 1970s, the increasing importance of social mobility, migration, schools, and other national institutions in Peruvian peasant societies was generating a process of *desindianización*, characterized by a rejection of traditional ethnic identities (*indio* and *mestizo*) in favor of the adoption of a regional identity as “people of the Sierra” (Bourque and Warren 1978, 16). Even though some members of these communities maintained strong connections with their traditional customs, they no longer thought of themselves as “Indian” (18)—a shift from ethnic to regional identity akin to the one discussed in this article. Both processes fit within a broader dynamic of sociocultural change that unfolded in Peru during the twentieth century.

<sup>31</sup> “Nuestro regionalismo no es localista. . . . Es de vertebración nacional.”

The historical period that is the focus of this article saw the intensification of ongoing transformations in ethnicity, identity, and cultural production that, in turn, would become dominant in the final third of the century, especially in the context of the debate on *cholificación* (Bourricaud 1967; Quijano 1980).

This article aims to contribute to the study of *desindianización*, its effects, and its aftermath by emphasizing the importance of teachers as key intellectuals who drive cultural change at a regional level. In this sense, the practices of the teachers analyzed here can be considered attempts to negotiate the effects of modernization locally. In a context where *lo indio* was rapidly losing ground to school culture, these teachers promoted the folklorization of the everyday family culture of the students and their families—a process that involved the living cultural experience and emotions of these local actors. It can be argued that the teachers recognized that Andean indigenous and mestizo populations had arrived at a crucial cultural crossroads, and thus tried to incentivize a popular (*serrano*) cultural identity that would reinvent a common regional bond, help them negotiate the sociocultural effects of new waves of modernization, and establish new forms of interaction with the national society and the state. Within this dynamic, teachers functioned as key actors in the formation of popular subjectivity, assuming an interventionist attitude and advocating what they considered the ideal path these inevitable, ongoing cultural transformations should take. Even though past studies on Peruvian teachers have underscored some aspects of the cultural impact of their practices, further research is still needed to better understand their role as promoters of cultural change in the context of *desindianización*.

This article also underscores the centrality and prevalence of an ideology of progress among Peruvian teachers before 1970. Teachers' willingness to accept and promote sociocultural change—contrasting with the attitude of some *indigenista* intellectuals who sought to “protect” indigenous cultures from modern influences—explains in part their interest in creating new identities in schools and local societies. Many teachers during this period, including the ones who are the focus of this study, shared the view that students, and by extension, their communities, should strive to achieve the ideal of “becoming modern.” However, this generated a paradoxical position for some teachers, who had to reconcile two opposing forces: the aggressive vertical imposition of “civilized” values, and the defense of the social and political value of traditional indigenous and mestizo cultures. Folklorization offered a means to resolve this apparent contradiction. Additionally, it should be noted that the link between progress and nationality or *peruanidad* seems to signal a high degree of ideological formation among teachers during the aforementioned period, a characteristic that might be extended to other intellectual workers, too. However, this observation merits further analysis as part of a comprehensive cultural history of Peru in the twentieth century.

Finally, the cases studied here emphasize the profound transformation that relations between intellectuals, the state, and the cultural market were experiencing at the time. On the one hand, state institutions offered many Peruvian intellectuals the opportunity to design and implement cultural policies that they would not have been able to carry out otherwise, for instance, a relative autonomy that allowed Arguedas and Barrantes to reinterpret state ideologies at a local level. On the other hand, certain education practices, such as the *concursos folklóricos*, put teachers in contact with the forces of the cultural market, albeit at an incipient stage. This new scenario, as it has been discussed, limited their autonomy in terms of the design and their agency in controlling the direction and the outcomes of their cultural projects. By the last third of the twentieth century, the pendulum of influence would drastically swing toward the market. Nonetheless, the folklorization cases analyzed here allow for us to explore the beginnings of this dynamic, when a relative equilibrium of forces still existed among intellectuals, the state, and the cultural market.

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