

2011

Waquichastati? : Aymara and Quechua in the Cataloging of Bolivian Materials

Tina Gross

St. Cloud State University, tmgross@stcloudstate.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://repository.stcloudstate.edu/lrs_facpubs



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

"Waquichastati? : Aymara and Quechua in the Cataloging of Bolivian Materials." In *Encounter, Engagement and Exchange: How Native Populations of the Americas Transformed the World*, edited by John B. Wright, 307-312. New Orleans, Louisiana: SALALM, 2011.

This Conference Proceeding is brought to you for free and open access by the Library Services at theRepository at St. Cloud State. It has been accepted for inclusion in Library Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of theRepository at St. Cloud State. For more information, please contact kewing@stcloudstate.edu.

Article originally published in “Encounter, Engagement and Exchange: How Native Populations Of The Americas Transformed The World. Papers of the Fifty-Third Seminar on the Acquisition of Latin American Library Materials” (New Orleans, Louisiana, 2011, pages 307-312).

***Waquichastati?* : Aymara and Quechua in the Cataloging of Bolivian Materials**

Tina Gross

I worked as a cataloger for the University of Pittsburgh library system’s Eduardo Lozano Latin American Collection from 1998-2007. That collection has long had a focus on collecting books and other materials published in Bolivia, and so the catalogers working with its acquisitions frequently encountered texts in Aymara and Quechua. None of the catalogers on Pitt’s Latin American Team had any background in these indigenous languages, and so cataloging them was often difficult and time-consuming. Fortunately, classes in both Quechua and Aymara were offered through the Linguistics Department’s Less Commonly Taught Languages Center, and I was able to study Quechua for three semesters and Aymara for two in order to help with the cataloging of Bolivian materials in those languages.

In preparing for this presentation, I attempted to identify other catalogers who could discuss working with indigenous languages of other regions in Latin America. I wasn’t successful in recruiting catalogers to be on the panel, but the effort did allow me to informally survey numerous other catalogers at Latin American collections at large U.S. research libraries about their experiences working with indigenous languages, and some of what I learned is reflected in the presentation.

Before moving on, I need to emphasize that I’m not a linguist, and that my knowledge of Quechua and Aymara is very basic. These observations are based only on cataloging expertise, and the experience of performing bibliographic analysis on library materials from Bolivia over a period of several years.

Categories

There are four basic categories of works including Aymara and/or Quechua that catalogers at the University of Pittsburgh encountered when working on Bolivian materials:

- Complete works in Quechua or Aymara
- Parts of works (for example, a collection of essays chiefly in Spanish, but with one or two essays in Aymara)
- Works with “parallel text” (a cataloging term for the same text in more than one language) in Spanish and Aymara and/or Quechua
- Works in Spanish, with some text in Quechua and/or Aymara (quotations, chapter titles, etc.)

Pitt rarely acquired works entirely in Aymara or Quechua, but the latter three categories were common. The other catalogers I communicated with indicated that the majority of cases in which they encountered indigenous languages fell into the third category, works with the same text in both Spanish and in an indigenous language. The second and fourth categories were also common, but I was surprised that the SALALM catalogers I spoke with reported they encountered works entirely in indigenous languages rarely, or not at all. Catalogers at two very large research libraries (the Library of Congress and Harvard University) indicated that their institutions did collect indigenous-language materials, but that they were cataloged by units other than the general Latin American cataloging staff.

Cataloging tasks

There are several kinds of tasks that might require particular attention when cataloging items in (or including text in) an indigenous language:

- Recording languages– All of the languages used in a multilingual work must be identified and the corresponding codes assigned to the bibliographic record, to enable searching by language (this functionality is usually made available in online catalogs as a search limit)
- Transcribing bibliographic data – The title, author, publisher and other bibliographic information must be identified and recorded. This is usually straightforward, but if the cataloger cannot read or understand the text, the different elements can be hard to identify – a series title could be confused with the publisher’s name, or the typography could suggest that a phrase is a subtitle when it is really something else.
- Parallel titles – When a work has the same title in more than one language, both titles are recorded in fields that allow them to be searched or browsed. Like transcription, this is usually simple, but there are cases in which a cataloger may have difficulty determining whether a title in an indigenous language really is parallel to the Spanish (or Portuguese) title or not.
- Authority control – One of the functions of library cataloging is that when an author or institution has published under several different names or versions of their name, the user can find all of their works. This is accomplished by the creation of “authority records” which bring together all of the variations.
- Subject analysis – Cataloging guidelines indicate that if a topic represents 20% or more of an item’s content, that topic should be represented in the subject headings assigned to the item.

Recording languages

In our work with Bolivian materials at the University of Pittsburgh, the problem that we faced most frequently when cataloging a book with text in an indigenous language was difficulty in

determining whether it was Quechua or Aymara. It may seem strange, but what language(s) a book is in isn't always obvious. It is not common for this to be explicitly stated, since the intended readers wouldn't need to have this information provided. The place of publication may be a significant clue, but there are many areas in Latin America in which more than one indigenous language is used. The Andes in Bolivia is a good example – Bolivian works related to Andean culture and history constituted the majority of cases in which it would have been plausible for the indigenous language present to be either Aymara or Quechua.

Because Quechua and Aymara co-existed for many centuries in overlapping geographic areas, mutual borrowing of words has meant that the two languages now share about 30% of their vocabulary. For the non-speaker, this means that determining that a word is an Aymara word in no way means that it isn't also a word in Quechua. Even terms that have a known origin in one language, and are generally considered to belong to that language, might still be used in the other. For example, "pachakuti" is a concept strongly associated with Quechua, but it isn't uncommon to see it used in Aymara texts. Likewise, "mallku" is an Aymara word, but its presence in a text doesn't necessarily rule out the possibility that the language is Quechua.

While there is significant overlap in vocabulary, the suffixes used in each language are much more distinctive (although there are still some minor commonalities). Both Aymara and Quechua are agglutinating languages, and so words are constructed by appending suffixes. Dictionaries of agglutinating languages are particularly hard for non-speakers to use, because fully-formed words as they appear in writing will not be found in a dictionary. Without some familiarity with common suffixes, a person doesn't know what to look up, and is not able to identify the different elements that make up words.

Because of these issues, identifying the language by using a dictionary, without having had any language instruction, was unreasonably difficult and time-consuming. It was largely this

dilemma that prompted me to take advantage of the opportunity to study both languages, and being able to distinguish Quechua and Aymara from one another was the primary task that my very basic familiarity allowed me to perform.

Transcribing bibliographic data

Identifying the bibliographic elements is most challenging when the typography and layout of a book's cover and front matter do not clearly indicate them, or when information that is usually found in a particular location is printed somewhere else (for example, the publisher's name is typically at the bottom of the title page, or on its verso).

Before I took Quechua and Aymara classes at Pitt, we had already gained some basic knowledge from experience that helped us to correctly identify different pieces of bibliographic information. For example, it was not uncommon to catalog books that gave their place of publication as "Chuquiago" or "Chukiyawu." This may have required consulting a reference work the first time it was encountered in order to determine that this is a traditional name for La Paz, but it was not difficult to familiarize ourselves with such frequently-occurring terms.

Parallel titles and alternate title access

Works with "parallel text" in more than one language almost always have parallel titles. The persistent challenge was determining whether a title in Spanish and one in Quechua or Aymara really did say exactly the same thing. However, an error in this area would be less problematic than other kinds of mistakes. A catalog record should provide access to all significant titles of a work, and so even if an entirely different title in Quechua were erroneously coded as if it were a parallel title, users would still be able to find the work by searching for either title.

Variations in spelling and orthography presented an interesting question. Library cataloging attempts to anticipate ways in which searchers might look for an item, and to account for common spelling variations. When cataloging an item with an indigenous-language title based on older spelling conventions, it might be helpful to also include a version of the title using the current unified spelling system. For example, when a title includes the place name "Tiahuanaco," it might be useful to also provide access to the title with it spelled "Tiwanaku." We didn't do this at Pitt, and it is not common practice in Latin American materials cataloging in the United States, but it could become a consideration when more indigenous-language materials are collected.

Authority control

In order to provide access to all of the works by a particular author, catalogers must identify the authority record established for that person or institution and assign the correct name heading. Doing this for personal names can be difficult when the name is common, but the special challenges related to working with indigenous languages are mostly related to headings for institutions (or "corporate bodies," as they are called in cataloging). Assigning the heading for a different institution with a similar name would impede user access, since it would direct users to the works of the wrong institution.

When an authority record for a particular institution has not already been made, the cataloger may need to create one. This must be done with care, because an error in an authority record could affect many other records. At Pitt, situations in which we needed to create "corporate body" authority records for institutions were not common, but did occur. We saw very few names of institutions that were entirely in Quechua or Aymara, but names in Spanish including indigenous-language words were fairly common. For example, I contributed an authority record for the Wayna Tambo, a cultural center housing an important radio station, because several

different permutations of its name appeared in different works (Centro Cultural Wayna Tambo, Casa Juvenil de las Culturas "Wayna Tambo").

Subject Analysis

In keeping with the 20% guideline, the subject analysis performed by a cataloger to determine the subject headings and classification number ought to include any sections in an indigenous language unless the proportion of it is very small. For example, say that a book consists of 10 essays of roughly equal length, with 8 essays in Spanish and 2 in Aymara, and that four of the Spanish essays are about the efforts to extradite Sánchez de Lozada, three are about the cocalero movement, and one is about the Asamblea Constituyente. In such a case, if neither of the essays in Aymara is about the Asamblea, then a subject heading for that topic might not be assigned because it only represents 10% of the work (of course, a cataloger might choose to provide more detailed subject analysis than the rules require, and at Pitt we often did so for Bolivian materials). But if either of the essays in Aymara was about it, then it would represent 20% or more of the work, and the subject heading would need to be assigned.

At the University of Pittsburgh, the materials that we encountered entirely in Aymara or Quechua tended to be mostly dictionaries and children's books, works with visual clues that helped us discern their subject content. Subject analysis is by far the most difficult task to perform on material in a language that one doesn't know well. Because of their descriptive nature, titles can be relatively easy to comprehend or translate, but when many pages of text need to be analyzed for subject content, a cataloger without what we call "bibliographic knowledge" of a language would need to spend much more time than is practical.

Conclusion

Given the growing prominence of indigenous culture and peoples in Bolivia and Latin America in general, it seems reasonable to expect that research libraries in the U.S. will collect more indigenous-language materials in coming years. Indeed, anticipating this was another factor that motivated me to take classes in Quechua and Aymara – the immediate need was moderate, but it seem poised to grow with an increase in the quantity of indigenous-language publications, and numbers of them collected by U.S. research libraries. Indigenous-language internet sites and resources are also growing in number and libraries with Latin American collections may consider cataloging them as one method to bring them to the attention of their users.

It's widely recognized in the profession of cataloging that functional familiarity with multiple languages is more useful than complete fluency in a small number. Since the need for catalogers to develop "bibliographic knowledge" of indigenous languages will probably increase, it is fortunate that such an increase in demand would be part of a larger groundswell of cultural output that is likely to bring with it both increased academic interest and new opportunities to study indigenous languages.