The Lettered Mountain
A Peruvian Village’s Way with Writing
Andean peoples joined the world of alphabetic literacy nearly 500 years ago, yet the history of their literacy has remained hidden until now. In The Lettered Mountain, Frank Salomon and Mercedes Niño-Murcia expand notions of literacy and challenge stereotypes of Andean “orality” by analyzing the writings of mountain villagers from Inka times to the Internet era. Their historical ethnography is based on extensive research in the village of Tupicocha, in the central Peruvian province of Huarochirí. The region has a special place in the history of Latin American letters as the home of the unique early-seventeenth-century Quechua-language book explaining Peru’s ancient gods and priesthoods. Granted access to Tupicocha’s surprisingly rich internal archives, Salomon and Niño-Murcia found that legacy reflected in a distinctive version of lettered life developed prior to the arrival of state schools. In their detailed ethnography, writing emerges as a vital practice underlining specifically Andean sacred culture and self-governance. At the same time, the authors

Praise

“The first ethnography of local writing and archiving practices, The Lettered Mountain does a marvelous job of describing the centrality of literacy to Andean societies of past and present...With Salomon and Niño-Murcia’s important ethnography, ignoring Andean writing is no longer possible.” — S. Elizabeth Penry, American Historical Review

In The Lettered Mountain, Frank Salomon and Mercedes Niño-Murcia explore the evolution of alphabetic literacy in Andean villages, providing a valuable historical overview of this theme from Inka times to the present.... It is further evidence of the complex interplay between socio-political conditions and epistemology and how “Western” visions of modernity are now under siege the world over.” — Gavin O’Toole, The Latin American Review of Books

"The Lettered Mountain provides historians with a rich template for understanding how peasant archives are constructed in the Andes." — Alan Durston, Journal of American History

“Simply put, The Lettered Mountain is a beautifully written book and a must read for those interested in multiple
Frank Salomon is the John V. Murra Professor of Anthropology at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. He is the author of *The Cord Keepers: Khipus and Cultural Life in a Peruvian Village*, also published by Duke University Press.

Mercedes Niño-Murcia is Chair of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese and Associate Director of the Division of World Languages, Literatures, and Cultures at the University of Iowa. She is a co-editor of *Bilingualism and Identity: Spanish at the Crossroads with Other Languages*.

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