

Bettina E. Schmidt\*

## Afro-Peruvian Representations in and around Cusco: a Discussion about the Existence or Non-existence of an Afro-Andean Culture in Peru

**Resumen:** El artículo investiga la herencia africana en los Andes peruanos, en la época colonial así como en tiempos recientes y actuales, 150 años después del fin de la esclavitud. La autora presenta en la mayoría estudios peruanos y algunos trabajos basados en investigaciones realizadas en el Perú. Como punto de partida son observaciones en Cusco. Después de resumir la literatura existente, el presente trabajo critica el supuesto general de que los esclavos africanos no sobrevivieron en los Andes y por eso no fueron transportados al Cusco. Por contrario, la autora argumenta que sí había esclavitud africana en los Andes, aunque no en números mayores por que el gobierno colonial decidió traer los esclavos a la costa por razones económicas e políticos. En su última sección, el artículo trata de los *negritos*, una danza popular en los Andes la que algunos investigadores conectan con la España musulmana y no con los esclavos africanos para limpiar la danza del estigma negativo de la esclavitud. La discusión de la literatura sobre esta danza lleva al debate sobre la imagen pública de los afro-peruanos hoy.

**Summary:** The article investigates the African heritage in the Peruvian Andes, in the colonial time as well as today, 150 years after the end of slavery in Peru. The author mainly discusses Peruvian studies as well as some other research reports conducted in Peru though the starting point is some observations in Cusco. After an overview about the literature the article criticises the general assumption that African slaves did not survived in the Andes and were therefore not brought to the Cusco area. The author argues instead that there has been African slavery in the Andes though not in great numbers because the colonial government decided to move the slaves to the coast because of economical and political reasons. The last part of the article focuses on the *negritos*, a popular dance in the Andes which some scholars even connect to Moorish Spain instead to African slaves in order to clear the dance from the negative stigma of slavery. The discussion of the literature about this dance leads to the debate about the image of Afro-Peruvians today.

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\* Cultural Anthropologist, lecturer in the study of religions at the University of Wales, Bangor.

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## 1. Introduction

On December 3<sup>rd</sup> 2004 Peru celebrated the 150<sup>th</sup> commemoration of the abolishment of slavery with proud proclamations, celebrations and festivals. As a result more and more Peruvians start to accept, even openly acknowledge the African presence within Peru. Nevertheless, Afro-Peruvians are invisible in the Andes, social marginalised in the informal sector or even as panhandlers. Football heroes with black colour are much praised and loved – but they are always associated with the coast (in particular, with *Alianza Lima* which is regarded as a club for Afro-Peruvians) and not with the Andes. In particular Cusco, the stronghold of Peruvian *indigenismo*, represents itself only with its Incan heritage and not as part of a pluralistic society. Pierre van den Berghe and George P. Primov describe Cusco even as a mixture of Spanish and Indigenous culture without any significant influence from Africa or Asia (Berghe/Primov 1977: 258). One small example illustrates the consequences today: After my arrival in Cusco in 2002 people soon informed me proudly about Quechua services in the churches in Cusco; but when I asked whether there was a reason for the black colour of the patron of Cusco, the *Señor de Temblores*, in the cathedral my esteemed colleague immediately said quite indignant that the colour had nothing to do with Africans. “Look, the figure is much darker than *negros* are.” Though there is indeed a quite pragmatic reason for the dark colour of the statue (the smoke of the candles), I was nevertheless perplexed by the harsh reaction my question evoked. As Denys Cuche (1981: 73) writes, every social group has in Peru “une strate bien définie de la société”. The place of Afro-Peruvians belongs at the bottom of society and not in the centre of a cathedral, even despite the presence of *San Martin de Porres*, an Afro-Peruvian saint – but from the coast.<sup>1</sup>

As the former capital of the Incan empire most Peruvian intellectualists celebrate in Cusco the Incan tradition. Some speak or understand Quechua and regard themselves even as Incan descendents. At an anthropological conference in Cusco in November 2002 a colleague proudly declared: “No somos indigena, somos Inca.” These *indigenistas* support the reconstruction of a presumed Incan tradition while the current indigenous people are still marginalised; economically more and more dependent on tourists. A similar attitude can be observed among international NGOs. Cusco is apart from being the tourism capital of Peru headquarter of international NGOs supporting ecological projects as well as indigenous activities, in particular in the Oriente. Hence one can notice an increase in indigenous presence in the town. The Afro-Peruvian population is – again – ignored.

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1 I will use the Spanish term *negro* inside quotes or as reflection of the attitude applied in texts (hence, in italic). Otherwise I will use the term Afro-Peruvian though there exists no Peruvian equivalent. Nevertheless, it is standard in Afro-American studies to refer to the continent instead to the colour.

Nevertheless, there are some relics of an African history in the Andes as I will demonstrate in my article, though these remainders of an African heritage in the Andes are regarded only as folkloristic curiosities of the Andes. In the eyes of Peruvians it has nothing to do with the present. Hence the presentation of Afro-Peruvians is isolated from their history in the Andes, or, as Olinda Celestino (2004b: 34) writes: “como grupo étnico de color visible se vuelve invisible a través de la historia”. I will start my article with an overview about the topic within the Afro-Peruvian studies. Though the focus of my article is on the Andes, I will include some of the research conducted at the coastal communities. Afterwards I will look at the colonial past and demonstrate that – in opposition to the general assumption that African slaves had to work only on coastal plantations but not in the Sierra – one can find in colonial records references to African slaves working, for instance, as builder or carpenters in Cusco or as labourers in nearby mines. The third part will discuss the presence. I will start with an assessment of different presentations of *negritos*, a very popular dance in religious festivals in the Andes, in the Peruvian literature. Then I will conclude with a discussion about the general representation of Afro-Peruvian people within the national society today.<sup>2</sup>

## 2. Topics in Afro-Peruvian Researches

In the last decades the interest in the Afro-Peruvian culture – or, more accurate, the interest in Afro-Peruvian folklore – increases. This development influences the research though there are still just a few scholars working in the field of Afro-Peruvian studies.<sup>3</sup> The majority of the few present studies investigate the colonial past as well as music, dance and religion; social and ethnical issues are widely neglected. Most studies are conducted by historians, some by sociologists and some by literature studies

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2 Most of my research was conducted in the *Centro de Estudios Regionales Andinos Bartolomé de Las Casas* in Cusco, Peru, while I was teaching at the *Universidad Nacional de San Antonio Abad del Cusco*, in the Departamento de Antropología, from October 2002 to January 2003. The visiting lectureship was partly supported by the DAAD, the research partly by the DFG as part of a larger research project conducted at the Institute for Comparative Studies, Philipps-University Marburg. I would like to thank all five institutions for their financial and moral support.

My main thank is directed to Olinda Celestino, though unfortunately posthumously. I had the great honour to meet her shortly after arrival in Cusco, just four months before she died. She offered me not only her wonderful friendship and support but also inspiring conversations about the African cultures in America. She is missed by all her friends and colleagues. Writing the final version of this article I got hold of her last publication, and was therefore still able to include her interpretation in this article, thanks to Albert Meyers.

3 Kerstin Nowack (see also Nowack 2004) mentioned in an email two new PhD thesis about Afro-Peruvian topics in the colonial past submitted in the US by Leo J. Garofalo (Connecticut College) and Rachel O'Toole (North Carolina, Chapel Hill). Both dissertations are unfortunately not yet published; hence, it was not possible to get a copy.

scholars. Peruvian anthropologists still focus on indigenous studies and ignore Afro-Peruvian topics.<sup>4</sup> As Olinda Celestino (2004a: 24) writes referring to the Andean studies in the Peruvian anthropology, “este tercer actor (el afroperuano) no aparecía”. One reason might be that the topic *étnico* is connected in Peru only to the indigenous identity, the *identidad andina*, the *indio*, the *Quechua* or *Aymara* and the various indigenous groups in the Amazon, hence a primordial category (Degregori 1993: 116.). Spanish speaking Afro-Peruvians are not considered to be ‘ethnic’. Even recent studies about identity focus only on the relationship between *mestizos*, *blancos* and *indios*; *negros* are excluded as this otherwise accurate analysis of the Peruvian society illustrates:

Hallamos entonces que el grupo cholo ocupa un espacio intermedio hacia el cual se desplazan los indios en el proceso de movilidad social; se trata pues de un grupo móvil en las relaciones interétnicas de la sociedad peruana. El mestizo, por otro lado, ha sido identificado gruesamente como grupo étnico, que representaría a la vez al sector intermedio entre los blancos y los indios. Esto significaría también que la movilidad social fue vista como un camino de indio-cholo-mestizo-blanco. Por tanto, observamos que existe una forma generalizada de adscripción étnica que comprende a cada uno de estos segmentos de la sociedad peruana; esto nos lleva señalar que los análisis generalizadores suponían básicamente una etnificación nacional de manera estratificada y jerárquica y no de grupos horizontales (Landa Vásquez 1999: 117).

Pioneer in the Afro-Peruvian research was Fernando Romero, a sociologist and poet. Romero investigated since the 1940s the history as well as the presence of the Afro-Peruvian culture. He was interested in particular in language; he studied, for instance, the influences of African languages on Peruvian Spanish. He insisted that several languages were spoken in Peru during the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, a time when the phonetic rules of Spanish were still flexible, apart from Spanish and Quechua also several African languages (Romero 1987: 93; 1988; 1994). He even discovered some African linguistic relics in Peru (1987: 163).

Some of his contemporaries are the historians Emilio Harth-Terré and Roberto MacLeon Estinós who started in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century to study African slavery in colonial Peru. The only other aspect of the Afro-Peruvian history apart from slavery, which interested the academia was the figure of the only black Peruvian saint, *San Martín de Porres* (see for an overview of the research Vega [app.] 1993: 15; see also Mariátegui 2000). Even the participation of Afro-Peruvians in the independence war was neglected in historical studies. As Denys Cuche (1975: 26) writes, the success was confiscated by the white creoles. This pejorative attitude also shaped the Peruvian

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4 According to a list of examination papers in anthropology between 1946 and 1982 topics as slavery, Africa or *negros* are not mentioned, but *cultura andina*, *comunidad campesina* etc., see the list published in Rodríguez Pastor (1985).

literature as Vega writes referring to several stereotypical (and pejorative) descriptions of Afro-Peruvians in novels and short stories (Vega [app.] 1993). Afro-Peruvian people were allowed to succeed only in some niches such as music and dance. Rosa Elena Vásquez Rodríguez writes, for instance, that music and dance do not only conserve some cultural relics but help to recreate new cultural expression according to social and material conditions:

Por ahora remarquemos el hecho de que en la práctica social, para el negro en el Perú, se conjugan elementos tanto de raíz africana como española y también de creatividad frente a las nuevas condiciones al que se les ha incorporado (Vásquez Rodríguez 1982:19).

The origin of the Afro-Peruvian music is traced back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century though it only gained national recognition in the last forty years. In 1957 *Compañía Pancho Fierro* performed as the first Afro-Peruvian group on stage in Lima (Vásquez Rodríguez 1982: 37). Vásquez Rodríguez characterises the *música negra* with these elements: The music is performed in a folkloristic way (e.g. ‘authentic black’) together with *Danza de negritos*; the musicians reconstruct nearly forgotten dances and music such as the *landó*, the dancers include new elements such as carnival dances or dances from Senegal or Cuba; and the musicians use old (traditional) instruments to develop new creations (Vásquez Rodríguez 1982: 44-46).

The revival started at a moment when the Afro-Peruvian population had to deal with a radical political development: the land reforms in 1968/69. The political decision led to an increasing integration of the Afro-Peruvian population in Peru according to Denys Cuche, a French historian, who predominantly studied the Afro-Peruvian community El Carmen in the Chíncha valley. When the government decided to include apart from the indigenous communities also Afro-Peruvian communities in the land reform, the members started to develop a rural awareness (*Conscience paysanne*) which broke step by step the isolation of the Afro-Peruvian population as Cuche describes it. However, instead of accepting Afro-Peruvian tradition as part of the cultural national repertoire, they became reduced to folkloristic elements (Cuche 1979: 255), on display for guests and tourists. Hence Cuche (1979: 256) characterises the Afro-Peruvian presence with two ambivalent notions: “négation de leur identité” and “curiosité pour leurs coutumes et leur rythmes”. Vásquez Rodríguez (1982: 24) presents a more positive interpretation and emphasises the creativity of the Afro-Peruvian population which created an own folklore despite the ongoing social suppression. Aldo Panfichi even celebrates the *cultura criolla* as a new – and better – development of the Peruvian culture: “Ser criollo, lo cual no anulaba el hecho de ser negro, zambo o mestizo, significaba ser ‘alegre y jaranero’” (Panfichi 2000: 153). Nevertheless, the reality is different as I will show at the end of my article.

Apart from the music scholars in the field of Afro-Peruvian studies investigate the religious specialty of the Afro-Peruvian culture. Though Peru had not seen the creation of an Afro-Peruvian religion as in Brazil or on the Caribbean islands, Cuche finds

traces of a 'black Catholicism' (in the sense described by Roger Bastide) based on *cofradías* (for instance, in 1650 a *cofradía* in honour of the *Señor de los Milagros* in Pachacamilla). With reference to Max Radiguet Cuche even states that one could still find elements of Islamic practices in the middle of the 19th century in Lima (Cuche 1977: 79).<sup>5</sup> As Patricia A. Mulvey and Barry A. Crouch write fraternal societies combined throughout the history of Latin American slavery secular and religious functions by fostering cultural heritage, promoting social prestige and offering specific economic benefits for those who participated (Mulvey/Crouch 1988: 51). According to their information "Peru had the largest number of slave confraternities" among the Spanish-speaking colonies of Latin America though most of the twenty-two Black brotherhoods in Peru were located in Lima (Mulvey/Crouch 1988: 58).<sup>6</sup>

Another aspect discussed by scholars is the reference to Africa. As just mentioned Cuche refers to a black Catholicism and not to an African one because the reference to Africa was according to his research just a minor one. He explains it with the small numbers of slaves and also with the fact that most of them were bought in other Spanish colonies, only few arrived directly from the African coast. Juan José Vega, an Afro-Peruvian scholar, celebrates on the other hand Africa as *nuestra Madre Patria* and insists that at the end of the colonial time more Africans arrived in Peru than Spanish people. Hence he declares that in particular the colonial Lima was largely influenced by Africa before the *negros* were expelled from the Peruvian history by mixture, war and violence (Vega [app. 1993]: 1). Nevertheless, even Vega's overview of the Afro-Peruvian culture shows the little presence of 'Africa' in Peru, even among people of African descent. The perception outside this group is even worse. *Negros* are defined as *hombres de color*, hence not only *negros puros* but people from various descent who are discriminated because of their skin colour (Cuche 1975: 13). The common factor is, therefore, the colour connected to social discrimination, not the reference to Africa.

Apart from these topics mentioned above the Afro-Peruvian contemporary culture (in distinction to the past) is widely ignored in the Peruvian academia. One exception is Olinda Celestino, already mentioned above, though due to her early death her work remained unfinished. The dominant focus still is the colonial time though the present has its own problems. Nevertheless, there is a growing field of scholars, some even from Afro-Peruvian descent. Throughout the article I will refer to some of them though I did not include them in this overview because of the similarity of their topics.

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5 With reference to Radiguet ([1845] 1971).

6 Mulvey/Crouch refer mainly to Bowser (1974).

### 3. Africans in the Andes – the forgotten people

The topic Africans in the Andes is a largely neglected one because of the general assumption that African slaves were not sent into the Andes because of the altitude. For instance, Waldemar Espinoza Soriano (1997: 241-242) writes in 1997 that the enslaved Africans had suffered under *anemia falciforme* (commonly known as Sickle Cell Disease); therefore they had died in great numbers and were rarely forced to work in mines. This presuming objective-scientific argument rarely hides the racist stereotypes which are still common, even in the academic disciplines. As Cuche (1975: 22) writes no Spanish colonists would have settled in the Andes because they, too, suffered under *anemia falciforme* though they did not work as hard as the slaves, of course, hence a lesser grade of mortality. Nevertheless, to send few slaves to the Andes was a political decision in order to secure the dominant position of the Spanish. In 1563, the viceroy Conde de Nieva advised the Spanish king against sending more African slaves to the Sierra because they already exceeded the number of Spanish people. He considered it a danger to the Spanish supremacy; hence he would recommend sending more indigenous to the mines (according to Bowser 1977: 44). Another factor was that mines became less relevant for the Spanish government after 1560 while the coast increased its meaning for Spain. Nevertheless, some African slaves were sent to work in high altitude as for instance Jean-Pierre Tardieu (1995) writes. He insists that Africans were indeed sent to the mines, for instance in Zaruma (Ecuador), Potosí (Bolivia) and Huancavelica (Peru) though he acknowledges that more often indigenous people had to work there as part of their duties. One characteristic of the Peruvian colonial history was exactly the different forms of forced labour African slaves and indigenous had to deliver at the same time. The only and most eminent difference was that liberty was detained from Africans.

Ignoring therefore the general assumption stated at the beginning, we can notice a different attitude towards African slaves during the colonial time, from the side of the Spanish government as well as from indigenous side.

At the beginning of the conquest enslaved Africans were sent to fight against the Incan empire. Luis Millones states that Pizarro has sent out a *negro* with presents to Inca Manco who took the gift but killed the envoy (Millones 1973: 26). The first official slaves arriving in Peru in 1529 were imported from Spain (hence they spoke Spanish), and were brought to Peru to fight together with indigenous people from Middle America and Cañaris from Ecuador against the Incan empire. Some even assume that the Incan empire could be conquered only with the support of battle tested slaves from Spain. The indigenous population in Peru encountered Africans, therefore, as part of the conquerors: both groups were alien, armed and destroyed together the Incan empire. Hence during later battles slaves always met the same fate as the Spanish slave holders (Millones 1971: 616). As Celestino (2004b: 35) writes “los negros eran el símbolo de la opresión que sufrían”.

At the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the strategy of the Spanish government changes with the consequence that the population in the Sierra declined. The Spanish government decided to cultivate the coastal areas; hence they needed more labour (in particular for the sugar production). First, they ordered manpower from the Sierra to the coast though some Africans remained, for instance, in Arequipa, Cajamarca and Cusco. Then the Spanish government started to import more slaves, from other colonies or, later, directly from Africa (though only few numbers). The first official slave market was founded in Lima between 1540 and 1550. As new capital most of the slaves lived in Lima. In 1593 slaves made half of the population of Lima, in 1640 more *negros* lived in Lima than *blancos* (Millones 1973: 29).

During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the collapse of the mines led to a migration of the few remaining Africans to the coast in order to find work (Cuche 1975: 22; Millones 1971: 600, 607). During the colonial time 95,000 enslaved Africans were imported to Peru, starting in 1529 (the year of the first royal license for the import of slaves in Peru) and ending in 1821 (the year of independence) (Cuche 1981: 19).<sup>7</sup> Despite the end of the trade the slave system was only abolished in 1854. The new republic ignored in the first decade the promises they made during the independent war. During this time some enslaved Africans were still brought into the country though illegally.

In spite of the sugar plantations and the slave system connected to these plantations, Fredrick Bowser characterises the Peruvian slavery in first stance as an urban institution which allowed enslaved Africans the possibility of social promotion (Bowser 1977: 11). While at the coast the agriculture and the urban activities as servants and craftsmen were separated, the groups mixed in the Sierra. The *negro ciudadano de la Sierra* developed his own lifestyle and a reasonable good relationship to the Spanish according to Millones. Hence the identification of the Africans with the Spanish ideal remained much longer in the Sierra than at the coast (Millones 1971: 603).

Records in the city archives of Cusco proof the existence of a slave market in Cusco. During the colonial time slaves increased the status of their owner, hence they were regarded as luxury objects and investment – apart from manpower. According to Tardieu slaves were rarely trained with a handcraft and moved fast from one owner to another as he discovered reading the records of a notary in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Cusco (Tardieu 1993: 1998). In distinction to Tardieu Donald Lloyd Gibbs notes that slaves in Cusco were indeed trained and worked as servants as well as craftsmen in Cusco and on the sugar plantation in the valleys west of Cusco and the gold mines in Carabaya east of Cusco. However, Gibbs does not distinguish between free and enslaved Africans so that the legal position of these black craftsmen is unclear. Nevertheless, Bowser also indicates that Africans were very popular in Peru as craftsmen; for in-

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7 Aguirre writes that between 1532 and 1816 100,000 enslaved Africans were imported into the vice kingdom of Peru (Aguirre 2000b: 64).



stance, the city of Cusco bought for the construction of the cathedral in Cusco nineteen bozales (Africans directly from Africa) at the slave market in Lima (Bowser 1977: 179).<sup>8</sup> Good craftsmen could even earn enough money to buy themselves free. Hence it is possible that Africans and Mulattos were indeed working as free craftsmen in Cusco during the 18<sup>th</sup> century while enslaved Africans had to work within households as Pierre van den Berghe and George Primov write (Berghe/Primov 1977: 45).

According to Gibbs 600 *negros* were living in Cusco in 1614 – on the first glance a small number, in particular in comparison to the 10,386 in Lima. Nevertheless, in relationship to the numbers of Spanish people (1,050 in Cusco and 11,809 in Lima) the number indicates that Cusco was indeed populated by a relatively high number of Africans. However, by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century the numbers were quite different. 284 enslaved and 993 freed Africans were registered in the area around Cusco in 1795, more than in 1614 but in relationship to the total population of 208,791 people of African descent constituted only 0.1% or 0.5% (Gibbs 1982: 216-217, van den Berghe/Primov 1977: 46, 275). Bowser (1977:160-161) describes that often the import of more slaves stopped because of lack of money; even when traders issued a royal license they could not collect sometimes enough money to buy the allowed number of slaves.

Emilio Harth-Terré (1973: 11) draws our attention to another aspect of the African presence in Peru: the relationship to between the African slaves and the indigenous population. According to him indigenous people were allowed to buy and sell African slaves when they could afford it. This development characterised the continuous decline of status: While at the beginning of the Spanish conquest slaves occupied a relatively privileged position as personal servants of the conqueror and as intermediaries between *mestizos* and *caciques* (though without the power of the first and the social position of the latter group as Cuche insists), their status soon declined with the increase of demand of manpower at the coast and the import of Africans as trade products (Harth-Terré 1973: 13; Cuche 1975: 24). Hence some indigenous people were given the right to own African slaves. Luis Millones (1978: 45) draws a different picture of the relationship between indigenous and Africans in the highlands. He writes, for instance, that the first had to suffer under the latter, enslaved as well as freed, because Africans benefited from their vicinity to the Spanish. This different interpretation could be created by the colonial attitude to homogenise the indigenous population instead of differentiating them according to ethnical and social aspects. Hence, while the general indigenous population indeed suffered under the social conditions, the indigenous elite received some benefits such as the right to own slaves.

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8 The main bell of the cathedral is called Maria Angola though nobody was able to explain the African name. As I was told there are numerous legends about her, some with reference to human sacrifice.

On the other hand one can find in the archives hints about conflicts between indigenous and Africans, though predominantly in the Sierra. Millones reports that the Spanish rulers had to separate *negros* and indigenous populations in the highlands because of ongoing battles between the two groups (Millones 1973: 30) though he does not describe the nature of these conflicts. Tardieu (1990: 54) reports from three particular lawsuits in the 17<sup>th</sup> century in which Afro-Peruvians were accused of a violent attack against indigenous people in Cusco. However, one can easily recognise in the judgments a preference of the indigenous people as he states. Hence the conflicts between the two groups can be interpreted as a colonial legend invented by the Spanish rulers to keep them separated as it was the strategy of the viceroy Francisco de Toledo (1569-1580). In distinction to his predecessor Nieva (1561-1564) Toledo did not stop the import of slaves in order to secure the Spanish dominion – the opposite was the case – but separated them: though both had to work for the Spanish governors, they were ordered to work in separate locations (Bowser 1977: 44). Hence it could be that the hostility between *negros* and *indios* during the colonial time was just an invention.<sup>9</sup> The Spaniards were, of course, afraid that a possible cooperation between the two groups would lead to a rebellion and finally to the loss of control. Hence they prohibited any co-operation or any other official relationship between the two groups. Their strategy was successful, even the rebellion of Juan Santos Atahualpa between 1742 and 1751 remained indigenous. Instead of asking the slaves to support him Juan Santos expelled them from his area. Nevertheless, they kept a neutral position as Celestino writes, some even supported the rebellion with their military expertise (Celestino 2004b: 35-39, here p. 38). Some decades later, during the rebellion of José Gabriel Condorcanqui (Tupac Amaru II), the support became more obvious according to Celestino's findings. She insists therefore that it is incorrect to describe the rebellion as an only indigenous struggle: "Tanto indios, mestizos, negros, zambos, mulatos, criollos e inclusive españoles fueron captados para la causa rebelde" (Celestino 2004b: 40). African slaves had, of course, the best reasons to rebel against their treatment, in particular after Tupac Amaru signed a decree that offered African slaves their freedom. In order to prove the African support Celestino even mentions in her article several individuals of African descents, born or living in Cusco who served Tupac Amaru in several ways, for instance as servants but also as messengers or as fighters (Celestino 2004b: 41-42).

Hence, despite the political strategy of the Spanish government to separate indigenous people from people of African descent one can find in the archives several hints

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9 María Rostworowski (2000: 30, 35) even writes that the enslaved Africans had more in common with the indigenous than with the Spanish people, in particular in the field of religion as she explains with reference to *Pachacámac*, the *dios de los temblores* and his syncretism with the *Señor de los Milagros*.

of an existing co-operation. Jesús Antonio Cosamalón Aguilar (1998: 256; see also Panfichi 2000: 138) even states that he discovered registered marriages between the two groups in Santa Ana, a *barrio* in Lima, during the colonial time though they were officially against the law. In particular marriages between a male *indio* and a female *negra* were quite popular between 1795 and 1820; their children were considered free according to the Spanish law.

An important characteristic of the colonial presence of Africans in the Andes is that they never construed a social group in distinction to the people of African descent at the coast but integrated relatively fast in the Andes society.<sup>10</sup> Tardieu (1998: 177-179) lists several reasons: the small number, a relatively high percentage of female slaves, and the high number of creole slaves. According to Bowser freed Africans in general easily integrated into the Spanish culture in order to get rid of the negative stigma of statehood. Through social rise and marriage more and more Afro-Peruvian moved into the group of *mestizos* (Bowser 1977: 368). The result was the disappearance of people of African descent in and around Cusco. Hence, the invisibility of Africans in the Andes had little to do with the reluctance of the Spanish colonial government to sacrifice their precious goods to sickle cell disease; it can be regarded as the result of an economical-political decision of the Spanish king as well as a result of the later integration of people of African descent into the *mestizo* population and their migration to the urban centres at the coast.

#### 4. The representation of Afro-Peruvians today

##### 4.1 *The negritos in the Andes*

At this point I will turn to a contemporary cultural aspect: the dances of the *negritos* in the Andes and the way they are represented in the literature. These dances which are in particular popular in Peru and Bolivia, are regarded in general today as indigenous dances. In the literature one finds statements that only in the coast the dancers are of African descent, in the Andes the dancers only carry a black mask or paint their faces black (Vásquez Rodríguez 1982: 65), hence no connection to the Afro-Peruvian people. Other authors such as Vega accept that “su origen remoto estuvo (imitando, criticando satirizando etc., según casos) en los esclavos negros y sus danzas; evolucionando luego dentro de hechura andina” (Vega [app.] 1993: 3), though the contemporary dances are still seen as indigenous or *mestizos*. On the other hand authors such as Cucho insist that these dances would proof that the African population would have influenced the Sierra more and much longer as usually expected (Cucho 1975: 22).

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10 Jaime Arocha (2004: 97) even limits the existence of such a group to Brazil when he writes that “Ni en Perú, Ecuador, Colombia o Venezuela tuvo lugar la valoración y la apropiación de la cultura afroamericana que sí ocurrió en el Brasil”.

One can find several descriptions of *negritos* in folkloristic studies though only few analytical case studies. I will present some of them to illustrate their very different ways to interpret the *negritos*. In particular the statements about the origin of the *negritos* vary in a great degree; some put them in connection to slavery (though under different perspectives), and some ignore the past at all.

Luis Millones and Horoyasu Tomoeda analyze the origin of the *esclavos de la Virgen de la Puerta* in Otuzco, near Trujillo. The two authors write that though the dancers are indeed indigenous, they still commemorate a connection to slavery. One group even led their origin back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century and connected it to a hacienda and the story of runaway slaves. Millones/Tomoeda (1996: 199) interpret this link with reference to the social conditions: slavery is seen as a symbol of poverty under which all members of the dance groups suffer. In another case study, Michelle Bigenho interprets the dance as a dramatic performance of the hard labour of the slaves, as she demonstrates with the quotation by one of the dancers:

Negritos, más o menos me doy cuenta, según los sentimientos, según el arte que bailan los negritos, según la pisa de uva que hace. Así cuenta todo, pues; como eran [...] los negros. Todo ahí cuenta. Entonces me doy cuenta, señorita, de que negritos proviene de – de África, pues, de los esclavos que era antes en tiempo de los españoles, pues, los africanos. Los grandes terratenientes, los hacendados, se compraba los negros, como animales, pues. Los negros – vendía, compraba entre ellos, los hacendados y los españoles. Y allí los hacía trabajar trabajos por hacerlos. Trabajos día y noche casi. Ellos no tenían casi libertad [...] (Bigenho 1998: 233).

Another connection to the slavery offers Gisela Cánepa Koch. She translates *Qhapaq Negro*, a popular dance figure in Paucartambo, Province Cusco, with *negro rico* and defines the figure as a representation of an African slave in the colonial time “quien le ofrece a la virgen sus cantos en los que cuenta de sus sufrimientos y de su devoción a ella” (Cánepa Koch 1993: 264). Nevertheless, the leader of the dancers is called *caporal*, or *rey negro*, what can be seen as a hint of the ambivalent relationship between indigenous and Africans.

Javier Pulgar Vidal interprets the dances very differently. He writes that during Christmas slaves had not to work, hence they experienced great joy which led to the invention of these dances. But he insists that today the dances are *mestizo*: the soul is indigenous, the music Peruvian, the clothes Spanish and the event Christian (Pulgar Vidal 1973: 14, 13, 27; see also Orellana Valeriano 1971-72 and 1972). Rosa Alarco (1975: 85-87) goes even a step further and separates the dances from slavery at all. She describes them as Spanish-Moorish origin.

Olinda Celestino who distinguishes between two different images in contemporary *negritos* representation, the rich *Qhapaq negro* and the poor *Waqcha negro* (Celestino 2004b: 51), locates the appearances of the figure of the *negro* back to the colonial times though she also confirmed that the dance is today performed in areas without

any African population. During the colonial time African slaves were rejected a civil identity being neither citizens nor indigenous but in the dances they founded a place to express their presence. As Celestino writes all dances had specific meanings in the religious festivals of the Spaniards, *criollos* and indigenous populations. Being controlled by the Spaniards and later by the indigenous, the festivals offered people of African descent an opportunity to present themselves to the society; hence the dances became an important medium to express their identity within the society (Celestino 2004b: 50). Later they became a medium to express difference, apart from any African element.

The several dances called *negritos*, *negrería*, *monenada*, and *pachahuara* still cause ambivalent reaction. Though name and appearance hint at an African heritage, the dancers appear to be *mestizos* or even indigenous. As Luis Millones writes in a different matter, slavery is still regarded with negative connotation. People should be of “raza buena... ni indígena ni negra”, others are still marginalised (Millones 1978: 61-62) as I could notice in Cusco. When I asked about the *negritos* and the black masks, I was told that they (= the dancers) were all criminals. Under their masks they would cover the scars that would identify them as *ladrones*. Hence, even the dancers, who want to have nothing to do with Africans, are marginalised because of the pejorative label of a dance that marks them even by using only a black mask.<sup>11</sup> Interestingly this negative story was the only explanation I could get asking questions about the *negritos* in Cusco. Others refused to speak about them or denied any connections to Africans, even to the African past. After my arrival the fact that there is still a dance called after the African past in the Andes fascinated me. At the end I had to realise that my original intention to find the forgotten people in the Andes failed. I just found some stereotypical stories, some pejorative images, even some pictures, but nothing else. The past seems to have vanished in the air with just a hint of its existence. Millones (1971: 594-595) still defends the Peruvian people and blames the strategic mechanism of the colonial and the republican governments for creating such behaviour, not racism. Nevertheless, the question remains whether Afro-Peruvians are part of the Peruvian nation today. Hence, in my concluding remarks I will broaden the perspective and leave the Andes.

#### 4.2 Afro-Peruvians as part of a national discourse?

Looking on the strategies of Afro-Andean identity José Jorge de Carvalho challenges post-colonial theory. He argues that post-colonial theorists always investigate the relationship between the coloniser and the colonised, the dominant and the dominated –

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11 Marisol de la Cadena (Ms. [1995]: 401) describes a similar discrimination concerning the *sagra*-dancers in Cusco.

and in this model there is no place for an Afro-Andean perspective. The dominator is, according to Carvalho (2004: 87), in the centre of post-colonial models, while the dominated aims to destroy the image of the dominator. However, the Afro-Andean world represents a controversial picture, hence destroys the post-colonial models. Carvalho insists that *el indio* has produced the discourse about *el negro*; hence it was the subaltern who produced the discourse about another subaltern, or, in Carvalho's own words, "el negro entra indirectamente, como si fuera por poder de procuración, en la lectura del indígena" (2004: 87). We have to keep this relation in mind when we look out for reasons for the ongoing invisibility of Afro-Peruvians in the Andes.

According to Juan Carlos Callirgos the essentialist categories *blanco*, *indio* and *negro* cannot be applied to the Peruvian people because the majority would identify as *mestizos*. However, he discovered based on his research of lonely hearts ads in newspapers that the society is structured basically on ethnical stereotypes, such as "El indio tonto, el negro violador, el blanco pituco, el cholo ascendente etc." (Callirgos 1991: 215). In particular jokes play with pejorative stereotypes, even racism as he illustrates with examples such as: "Libreme Dios de cholo con mando, de negro con plata y de blanco con hambre" (Callirgos 1991: 214). *Negros* are regarded in particular as despicable. After the abolishment of slavery they were portrayed mainly as mentally retarded. Only the common catholic practice gave them some benefits in distinction to the Chinese labourers who were hired after the emancipation but were also treated as alien (Cuche 1975: 63, 103). In 1897 Clemente Palma published in *El porvenir de las razas en le Perú* a racist manifest about the Peruvian society in which he described the *raza negra* as biological inferior. And even José Carlos Mariátegui shared this opinion (Maihold 1988). Though today it would not be possible to publish this book, Carlos Aguirre insists that some would still think in this way (Aguirre 2000a: 13-15). Aguirre traces this attitude back to the time of slavery but differentiates the subtle racism in two notions. First, racist attitudes spread unconsciously, for instance in jokes, in stereotype statements or in aesthetic standards; and second, racism is caused by structural condition such as poverty, marginalisation and the lack of dominant representatives in the ruling part of society (Aguirre 2000b: 73). Thus Cuche's statement about Peru in the 19<sup>th</sup> century still describes the current condition:

La sociedad peruana era pluriétnica sólo en el sentido que en un seno existían distintos grupos étnicos; pero la coexistencia pacífica de estos grupos era muy relativa. La discriminación racial era la actitud que predominaba (Cuche 1975: 117).

Afro-Peruvians still do not constitute a homogenous group or a homogenous ethnic identity despite the fact that during the 19<sup>th</sup> century a sense of belonging to the *gente negra de Perú* developed among people from African descent (Cuche 1975: 135-136). They still lack cultural brokers who can fight on their behalf or represent them in the parliament or other official committees. Though they are integrated in the Peruvian society, they remain at the bottom of the hierarchy. Peru continues to be divided into

three parts: *Sierra*, *Costa* and *Selva*. Because of the capital the coast represents the political and economical power; the Sierra with its Incan heritage dominates its imagination. No place for Afro-Peruvians.

Nevertheless, I will not end my article leaving a negative impression. As even Jorge Ramírez Reyna who focuses in his article on the factors explaining the ongoing marginalisation of Afro-Peruvians, hints the situation of people with African descent changes. After Afro-Peruvian poets (for instance, Nicomedes Santa Cruz) and musicians (for instance, Susana Baca) Afro-Peruvians now become visible in the political arena by founding organisations such as the *Asociación de la Juventud Negra* (ACEJUNEP) in 1972 or the *Asociación Negra de Defensa y Promoción de los Derechos Humanos* (ASONDEDH) in 1990 (Ramírez Reyna 2004: 132-133). On the internet I found even more organizations such as the *Movimiento Nacional Afroperuano Francisco Congo*, the *Instituto Nacional de los Pueblos Andinos, Amazónicos y Afroperuanos* (INDEPA) and the *Centro de Estudios y Promoción Afroperuano* (LUNDÚ). These organizations start to carry Afro-Peruvian issues in the national discourse, some even in cooperation with indigenous groups. In 1993 the constitution in Peru ensured that every person has the right to his/her own ethnic and cultural identity, and the state has to acknowledge and protect the ethnic and cultural plurality of the nation. But, as Ramírez Reyna (2004: 134) writes, article 89 only refers to the “Comunidades Campesinas y Nativas”. Nonetheless, the pressure on the government increases, in particular because of the co-operation between Afro-Peruvian and indigenous people. *El Foro Afroperuano*, which includes eight different Afro-Peruvian organizations, signed in 2001, for instance, the *Declaración de Pachacamac* in order to reunite the efforts of indigenous and Afro-Peruvian people. In 2002 women from various ethnic descents founded REFIAP (*Red de Facilitadoras Indígenas y Afroperuanas*), another sign of the increase in cooperation between the ethnic minorities in Peru. The list could go on and on but even this sample already illustrates the vibrant dynamic of Afro-Peruvian activities today. Perhaps, one day, Peru will even acknowledge its past in the Andes.

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