

BOOK REVIEW ESSAYS

Nineteenth-Century Peru: A German Merchant's Diary

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This essay reviews the following work:

The Diary of Heinrich Witt. Edited by Ulrich Mücke. 10 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2016. Pp. ccxx, 7017; incl. 604 images. E-book, open access. ISBN: 9789004307247.

Ulrich Mücke's and Christa Wetzel's decade-long work on Heinrich Witt's (1799–1892) lengthy diary has now been published in ten volumes.¹ The volumes have counted on the participation of several other collaborators over the years, including members of Heinrich Witt's Peruvian Garland family, who also safeguarded his documents for over a century. This masterpiece of patience and endurance (by both Witt himself and editor Ulrich Mücke) is now available to everyone interested in a biographical reading of Peru's (and the world's) nineteenth-century history.

The diary moves at two rhythms: one that narrates daily occurrences and encounters with local peoples Witt encountered, the other that provides thoughtful pages-long assessments of special moments and events, sometimes over long stretches of time. Through my reading of Witt's diary, for example, I was able to trace General Andrés de Santa Cruz from his participation in the wars of independence next to General Simón Bolívar (1821), through the Peruvian-Bolivian confederation's attempts against the Chilean-Peruvian army (1836–1841), into his exile in Paris (beginning in 1841), where Witt on his five trips to Europe met Santa Cruz and his wife. Heinrich Witt, indeed, not only mingled with Lima's elites, but was also very interested in Andean politics and even records his ideas on parliamentary debates. His detailed diary is very useful to reconstruct almost an entire century of the social, political, and economic *ambiente* in Peru. We also get a glimpse on what was happening at the same time in Europe—in Germany, Britain, and France, in particular.

The Man and His Life

Heinrich Witt was born into an extended merchant family at the brink of transformative events in both Europe and America. Witt's father saw the confiscation of his ships by Britain during the Napoleonic Wars. The personal consequence for Witt was that he could not marry the love of his youth, Emily Reincke, due to "class disparities." Whereas in Europe the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte returned European countries into the realms of monarchical power, Americans were shedding off their colonial masters and putting *repúblicas* into place after the Vienna Congress in 1815. After 1808, England forbade the slave trade based on its growing maritime power and upheld (and sponsored) free trade, especially beyond its own boundaries.

Witt spent his first years of life between Altona/Hamburg and London (1799–1822), and started a five-year merchant apprenticeship with the well-known trading company of Conrad Hinrich Donner, who, incidentally, was his godfather. Merchandising had been a family tradition among families over several generations in an expanding and successful radius of mercantile, financial, and banking networks. Readers can find a "short" and rich biography of Heinrich Witt in vol. 1 by Christa Wetzel (x–lxxxviii). Herein, I will only highlight those moments that allowed Witt to be an involved interlocutor of historical events, a person who lived in two worlds with a keen eye on understanding both.

Sent from Liverpool to Arequipa, Peru, in 1824, Witt was to help with a new branch of the Gibbs & Co. merchant house, at age twenty-five. In 1824, the wars of independence were not yet over, but Gibbs & Co., like many other European merchant houses, trusted the victory of the independence fighters and were eager

¹ Ulrich Mücke introduced the work in "El diario de Heinrich Witt y la historia del Perú en el siglo XIX," *Histórica* 41, no. 1 (2017): 171–186.

to have an early trading start with the new republics. The former *intendencia/audiencia* (later *departamento*) of Arequipa became Witt's residence for the next eight years. From Quilca (Arequipa's former port city), the British merchant house imported manufactured goods and shipped sheep and alpaca wool and smuggled gold and silver to mainly Britain. In 1831, Heinrich Witt married *arequipeña* Maria de la Sierra and adopted her three children. Witt traveled extensively in Peru's highlands and the Bolivian Yungas, from which most of the wool and also the Peruvian bark (*cascarilla*) came. During these years civil war in Peru and Bolivia was rampant and, more often than not, both countries had more than one president simultaneously. Several more trips followed in the 1830s and 1840s to Northern Peru (Trujillo, Cajamarca), to the Amazon basin, and to Valparaiso and Santiago in Chile. Traveling the Andean countries gave Witt a fine sense of what was happening in the provinces during tumultuous times, which is plainly reflected in his account.

Between 1836 and 1839 Bolivian president General Andrés de Santa Cruz was attempting to forge the Peruvian-Bolivian Confederation, and for a time Peru was divided into Northern Peru and Southern Peru (which included the former Alto Peru, today's Bolivia). Chile opposed this territorial merger as it saw its Pacific predominance threatened, especially with Santa Cruz's attempt at opening the port of Cobija in Southern Peru to find an outlet for produce coming from Bolivia. Chilean troops in alliance with the opposing parties to the Confederation defeated the Bolivian general-president and, once again, especially the wool exports were framed by tariffs and national boundaries. At the same time, the war scenario itself provided foreign merchant houses with an opportunity to sell/import arms and textiles for uniforms to Chileans and Peruvians. In a sense, as also revealed in Witt's travel entries, merchant capital in this scenario (and others) is "war-neutral" or, put differently, is not bound by national political, economic, and social interests and agendas.

In the early 1840s, at the other side of the Atlantic, Hamburg was part of the state of Schleswig-Holstein, under the rule of the Danish king, whom Witt met. He became Denmark's consul general, a position that put him into close contact with the diplomatic world of his times. Throughout his diary, he talked to foes and friends and in no few cases, became a long-term connecting agent between them. He was in a position to do so because his experiences and his worldview were informed by a double peripheral positioning: as a Hamburger and as an Arequipeño and a Limeño.

In Lima, Heinrich Witt settled in the family house on Calle del Correo, surrounded by Lima's upper class and living the life of an upper-class member. Before starting his own business out of his home, Heinrich Witt ventured once again to Southern Peru (Arica, Tacna, and Arequipa). When Witt was not playing chess or cards in the foreign merchants' club, or climbing Cerro San Cristóbal in Lima, he was busy educating his two granddaughters, Maria and Corina, at home, as was customary for young women. The boys were sent to Europe and guarded by relatives who lived in Europe. This was a typical pattern of social and spatial mobility around the mid-nineteenth century. European men married local, well-connected and well-situated Peruvian women to enter the ranks of the elite; their (male) children studied abroad to come back, either married with a (maybe not so well-situated) European woman or to marry the descendant of a European or Peruvian family in Peru. Overall, this was a pattern by which Peruvian elites became europeanized and whitened, while at the same time reproducing and closing class ranks. Witt's reading of marriage alliances, his register of who died when, provide a sense of the widespread networking among Lima's elite families and, consequently, the buildup of class alliances across continental spaces. Family networks, merchant activity, home ownership, and diplomatic (political) endeavors are the markers of a successful rising Peruvian bourgeoisie. And Witt did not fall short on this list.

Witt's daily life and his household structure clearly reproduced the social differentiation prevalent in the rest of Peruvian society: white people controlling (or trying to control) the subordinate indigenous, black, *casta*, and, since midcentury, the quasi-enslaved Chinese laborers. In his home, maids and (wet) nurses were black or *casta*, as were the men who drove his horses and mules through Lima's streets; butlers, friends, teachers, secretaries, and acquaintances visiting his home were white; people in the kitchen were Chinese. In 1852, Witt bought Achipe, who cooked for the family and the many guests until the 1870s; in 1872 Ayao came to the Witt household. Both were bought in Callao, descending from a ship that had brought them under truculent circumstances from Macao/China. Some entered through the front door, some through the rear door. Such behavior was framed by a notion that the underdogs were born lazy and thus doomed to serve and obey, often without pay.

Business life changed around 1850, when Christoph Wilhelm Schutte and Juan Diez cofounded a trade company under the name of Enrique Witt e hijo. With their wives, Schutte and Witt visited Europe for a period of three months to see family and friends and reestablish financial and commercial contracts. They also met with former Peruvians now living in Europe, among them the ex-president of the Peru-Bolivian

Confederation, Andrés de Santa Cruz. After his return to Lima, business slowed down but also expanded into China, California, and Australia in the hands of Diez.

By 1862, the Peruvian government awarded the company a contract to export guano to Germany, then further expanded the contract to include Denmark, Norway, Sweden, and Russia. Millions of pesos were earned from the export of guano between 1840 and 1870, when a financial crisis hit the Peruvian economy, resulting from over-borrowing of money by the Peruvian government. Until 1870, advance payments, like the one made by "Henry Witt & Schutte," covered the gaping fiscal holes resulting from paying slave owners inflated amounts of money to liberate the slaves (1854), to cover the lack of fiscal income that came with the abolition of the Indian head tax (*tributo indígena*, of colonial origin) also in 1854, and the construction of railroads and the purchase of locomotives since the 1860s. Added to the fiscal overspending came the gradual decay of the accumulated guano deposits, the discovery (in Germany) of synthetic fertilizer, and the nationalization of the nitrate fields in Southern Peru owned by Chilean and British investors. In the end, these scenarios led to the War of the Pacific (1879–1884), once again with Peru and Bolivia on one side confronting Chile on the other.

In spite of Peru's financial crisis and war, Witt continued his financial business and bought shares in corporations recently established in Lima: Pacific Steam Navigation Company, Banco de Lima and Banco de Crédito Hipotecario, Cerro de Pasco Railway Company, Huacho Railway Company, Lima Gas Company, Telegraph Company, Lima Water Company, and South American Insurance Company, becoming a board member in some of them. In early 1864, the Peruvian currency was changed from pesos to *soles* to help replace the then vastly circulating inferior Bolivian coins (*pesos febles*), which were not only detrimentally affecting the national economy, fiscal revenues in particular, but also all those merchant houses being paid with debased silver coins. Also in 1864, Witt bought a big house at the corner of Calle de Zárate and Calle de Aldavas, which carried many years of lawsuits because of uncleared hereditary issues on the seller's side. Only in 1871 could the couple move into their rooms in the new house. This situation made Witt very aware of the workings of the judicial system.

Investments like those undertaken by Witt marked Peru's path into modernity, when capital moved mainly into the service sector. What changed was the pattern of accumulation and investment: from merchant capital reproducing itself to merchant capital being invested locally in expanding the service infrastructure (railroads, banks, insurance companies, gas, water, and electricity).

Witt's wife, Maria de la Sierra, died in May 1876. Her death triggered a fundamental change at almost all levels of Heinrich Witt's life. His social visits came to a standstill; he resigned his board appointments and tendered his resignation as consul general; he left the German Club, dismissed his Chinese cook, and took his meals with his daughter Enriqueta and her family. After reviewing Maria's personal items, he took stock of his wealth, which by 1877 amounted to 923,000 soles: one half he distributed among his wife's three children. The house on Calle Zárate became Enriqueta's portion of the inheritance, Juan Diez obtained the house on Calle del Correo. In 1876, he ordered the construction of a mausoleum, where his wife's coffin was transferred in October 1878 and where he was to be buried when the time came. In the meantime, visits to the cemetery on Sundays became another ritual in Witt's life.

Witt lived in Enriqueta's home, together with his nine grandchildren, all of whom had returned from Europe; some of them had married. Witt's life continued with more readings and more writings at home and across the Atlantic, although some of his closest friends and relatives, both old and young, passed away. Still, quite frequently, children and grandchildren on both sides of the Atlantic continued their parents' correspondence with Witt. His grandson Enrique Garland succeeded him in the position of Denmark's consul general, but Heinrich continued to assist him. Although Witt took some of his earlier business endeavors up again after a long mourning season, he had to slow down because of health and age, but also because of the Peruvian economy's downfall. The drastic devaluation of the Peruvian sol meant a huge financial loss for most commercial agencies, including Gibbs and Witt.

For three years, the Chilean occupation forces ravaged Lima, while Peruvian forces in the Andean Central Highlands were still offering resistance under the leadership of Andrés A. Cáceres. Some foreigners opted to transfer their properties to British citizens living in Lima and other coastal areas under the assumption that the British were better protected in the war scenario. Witt's house in Lima was saved from looting and destruction, but the family's rancho in Chorrillos suffered. Most properties in the city lost value. By mid-1882, amid the still raging war, Heinrich Witt and his family ventured on their fifth trip to Paris, London, Hamburg, and Altona. By July 1884, they arrived back in Lima, where he continued his visits and receiving visitors, his walks to the cemetery, and his work with his readers and secretary. One visitor who had become a friend was Ernst W. Middendorf (1830–1908), a German physician and anthropologist who had been Maria de la

Sierra's and Heinrich Witt's medical consultant since 1865. When Middendorf returned to Germany in 1888, he published a three-volume work about his years' long experiences in Peru (1: footnote on pp. lxxxv–vi).²

After returning from Europe, Witt no longer started any business of his own, living from his investments in Europe, providing occasional loans to members of his family, financing a new rancho in Chorrillos, covering household expenses and damages, and now assigning one home in Lima to his daughter Enriqueta and another to his granddaughters Maria and Corina Garland. His circle of friends had shrunk considerably by the time Witt himself was almost ninety years old. In Europe too, fewer people he had known for many years were still around. Heinrich Witt died on November 3, 1892, in the family home at Calle de Zárate no. 96 (1:lxxxvii). At the end, he made his daughter Enriqueta almost his only heir; his diary, however, he left with his grandson Alejandro Garland.

The Man and His Diary

Witt's story was in his own view intended as a document to testify to his personal and professional success, to underline the differences between cities like Arequipa and Lima and Hamburg, to provide evidence of the superiority of (Western) European science, technology, and culture. The diary portrays him as a modern world citizen in an emerging middle/upper class still struggling with the remnants of colonial thinking and behaviors. Caught between a national war and a double financial crisis (1870s and after the War of the Pacific), Witt was a witness and victim of financial globalization.

Family members thought that some of Heinrich's annotations were bashing and trashing some of their actions, which meant that they dialogued with his diary entries, keeping his diary alive. Alejandro Garland's granddaughter Kika (Eloyda) Garland de Montero received the diary and passed it on after her death in 1993 to her son Clemente Palma Garland (my parents' neighbors in Cieneguilla, Peru, back in the 1960s, the founder of Radio Miraflores, and a proud owner of Peru's cherished *caballos de paso*). Heinrich Witt had begun writing his diary proper in September 1859, at age sixty. The narrative part of his diary begins with his first journey from London to Peru in 1824, whereas his earlier career and family relations are only dealt with briefly in volume 1. The next eight volumes are "a continuous running account of Witt's life from April 1842 to mid-May 1881, aside from a few sections that interrupt the chronology" (Wetzel, 1:lxxxix). Throughout his long life, Witt worked with eleven secretaries to write and rework his diary entries, often counting on the benefits of hindsight. Reworked and narrated portions of his diary were carefully recorded by Witt. In the introductory paragraph to volume 6, Witt advises his readers on gaps in his diary because of his failing sight, a gap between October 28, 1852, and June 10, 1856, promising to be filled later, which according to him he did, starting on November 29, 1875. Largely, he argued, this gap was due to his two granddaughters, who "felt little inclined for longer detailed notes." Christa Wetzel, who has studied all the volumes with a very keen eye, writes: "Witt tells the tale of a complex history of his own life as a virtually lifelong diarist, a tale that allows us to reconstruct in detail the genesis of the extant diary" (1:xcv), and I would like to add, Andean history. The present print edition counts more than fifteen thousand entries of places and names.

Diary and History: Walking Life with General Andrés de Santa Cruz

Very literally, Heinrich Witt was greeted in Arequipa in the midst of independence celebrations with the presence of General Simón Bolívar and the Colombian army. From the very onset of his arrival, Witt was placed in the heart of the political life among elites in a city that was (and is) well known for its separatist tendencies, as the hub of foreign commercial and consular presence, and together with Puno, Sucre, and La Paz as the ideological architects first of the Peruvian-Bolivian Confederation (1836–1839) and, later, the War of the Pacific (1879–1884), and a varied set of revolutionary attempts in between (see below). His entry to Peru provided him not only with a bride and many grandchildren but also a day-to-day experience with most political leaders in Peru, Ecuador, Bolivia, and, more occasionally, Chile, whose tracks and traces he followed systematically, marking his own identification with the political destiny of the country.

After much celebration, civil war became a rampant aspect of politics in all three Andean countries and each country suspected its neighbor, while individual caudillos transgressed borders either to attack a caudillo across the border or to rearm himself to take back power in his own country. In other words, borders became a political and military instrument. On more than one occasion, Witt's own family was involved. "My brother in law Don Mariano Sierra a faithful adherent of President La Mar, fell of course into disgrace when La Mar's Government was upset by Gamarra's revolution in 1829 and he lived in great retirement until

² Ernst W. Middendorf, *Beobachtungen und Studien über das Land und seine Bewohner während eines 25-jährigen Aufenthalts* (Berlin: Oppenheim, 1893–1895).

the end of 1833 when Luis Orbegoso was elected President" (1:157 [191]).³ Witt's brother-in-law was one of the many victims of the political vagaries that followed the wars of independence and well describes its impact on people's lives, future, and outlooks. This kind of entry in the diary, in retrospect, as connecting narrative, is a reading from a very personal point of view of the political course of Andean history, based on the closeness a peripheral observer like Witt had to political events. Over many pages Witt describes the presidential/military history of the Peruvian-Bolivian Confederation, followed by yet another connecting narrative written in 1862:

Andrés Santa Cruz was the real chief and head. For about two years things went on smoothly and in my humble opinion, since the declaration of independence Peru had never been so well governed as it was during this period. Santa Cruz of almost Pure Indian extraction, is no doubt a man of great capacity; in his domestic circle he is a good husband and a good father, he is not a libertino like Echenique, not a drunkard like Orbegoso, not a gambler like Castilla [...]. Santa Cruz commanded and everybody obeyed [...] and woe to him who was not on the spot at the fixed hour and regularly at work. Santa Cruz surrounded himself with good ministers and upon the whole preferred placing his trust on foreigners [including Witt himself] rather than in natives, as a proof of which I may mention General Braun the Hanoverian [from Hannover, city in Northern Germany] who was his right hand in Bolivia, General Miller, Colonel made by him, General O'Brien, Irish; General Moran, Colombian, García del Río, one of his best ministers, Colombian; Mora the Spaniard who edited the excellent newspaper called "El Eco del Protectorado", and various others. (1:165–167)

What Heinrich Witt, being an expert in double bookkeeping, also greatly admired in Santa Cruz's mandate was the fact that as a result, "for the first time since the Independence, not only the army and military but also the Civil employees, judges, widows, etc. received their pay and pension at the end of every month when it was due to them." The only major critique of Santa Cruz was "lowering the standard of the Bolivian coin which he introduced as a legal tender into Perú and which now 1862 has become the only circulating medium which we have," leading to price increases and making Lima one of the most expensive places in the world. From Witt's commercial perspective "this injury done by Santa Cruz to Peru outweighs all the benefits conferred by him to the country" (1:290–291 [358, 359, 360, 361]). Notwithstanding the damage, more than two decades after the Confederation attempt had failed, the *peso feble* underwent a monetary reform in 1863, and Witt would be one of Lima's elite members willing to step in to remedy the situation by helping eliminate the *moneda feble* from circulation and engaging in the minting of the silver-content-controlled *sol*. Beyond his critique, in many ways, Witt became a lifelong companion of General Santa Cruz.

Places and Historical Memory

In Witt's several travels to the interior of the country, every time he visited a place he would recall exactly what had happened at that place in years prior and often provided a detailed description (Lima, La Paz, Huaraz, Hualgayoc, Iquique, Mollendo, and many more). When he reached Huaura in Northern Peru in April 1842, he recalled that this had been the place where Santa Cruz had convoked the Asamblea del Estado Nor-Peruano in 1838 (1: 460 [610], entry of Monday, April 25, 1842). Similarly, when in the departamento of Ancash (Carhuaz, Caras, Yungay) on the estate of San Miguel belonging to the Terry family, acquaintances of Witt, he recalled that in 1839, before the battle of Yungay, "also called of Ancachs [*sic*] was fought, the united Peru-Chilian [*sic*] army commanded by Gamarra and Bulnes (El Ejército Restaurador) had its headquarters on this estate. When it was completely ruined, with difficulty had the Terry family obtained from the Peruvian Government an acknowledgement of \$ [pesos] 5,000 at which the damages had been estimated. Interest was paid to them and a promise had been given to discharge the principal as soon as the financial matters of the state would allow" (1:533 [722], entry of July 1, 1842). Together with the recollection of places and historical events came the observation of the terrain after the battle subsided. "Next I came to the river Buin, which like the Ancachs [*sic*], flows in the Santa [river]. Its bed is deep and narrow, a wooden bridge leads over it on the other side the ascent is somewhat steep, and the summit crowned with natural parapets, which must have served as an excellent defence [*sic*] for the Peru Bolivian Army, which a few weeks before the decisive battle of Yungay had here an engagement with the "Ejército Restaurador." There is little doubt that if Santa Cruz had shown some energy and promptitude in

³ Numbers in square brackets refer to the journal entry number corresponding to the original manuscript pages, as Mücke explains in his introduction.

following the retiring army, he might have inflicted severe loss on it, but Santa Cruz with a great capacity as a ruler was deficient in military talent" (1:533–534 [722, 723]). Seemingly, by then Santa Cruz's foreign advising generals had left him alone.

Reading, Listening, Writing, and Living

What Heinrich Witt did not find out by traveling, talking to politicians, or through reading newspapers, he gathered from co-travelers on land and by sea, as when the steamer *Chile* entered the port of Trujillo and he, Mr. Wyman, Mr. Barnard, Mr. Macpherson, and two other residents of the city of Trujillo boarded the ship and "met McLoughlin who had been since I left him Tuesday last, in Guayaquil and up the Guayas river as far as Bodegas, he considered war inevitable between Ecuador and Peru, and the claim of the former for the provinces Jaen and Mainas a mere pretence—money it was that the President Flores required. He further assured me, that neither Santa Cruz, nor Orbegoso living there in banishment were taking any part in this political intrigue" (1:470 [624]). In other words, Witt became a kind of intermediary between contending caudillos, even knowing their whereabouts beyond Peru's borders. These kinds of interconnections are not visible in usual history writing, mainly how someone with a sharp sense for politics as embedded in daily life kept the threads in his memory. Through this kind of reporting, we also learn, for example, of Santa Cruz's possible instigation of a coup against President Diego Portales in Chile in 1838:

To him many attribute the rising which took place in Chile in the beginning of 1838 against the existing Government of that republic. Diego Portales one of the most illustrious men to whom Chile owes so much in establishing that steady and regular course of administration which distinguishes her so highly from her sister republics of South America, was the man whom Santa Cruz most feared. Some soldiers in Valparaíso mutinied and Portales was their first victim, the rising was suppressed without much blood shed. From this abortive attempt Santa Cruz if concerned in it derived no benefit, but his good name was stained whether deservedly or not I do not venture to decide. (1:558–572 [758–780], especially p. 566 [771, 772])

Through the intensity of his observations and his sense of detail, Witt provides a felt closeness to the events he witnessed, was informed about, and wrote and commented on. In doing so, he rescues a sense of living during those particularly hectic and conflict-ridden times, very often providing pieces of information that were either never connected in historical writing or are unknown in the monographs we read. Witt's recollections of the various border transgressions and how such transgressions were conducive to the restructuring of alliances across the border, thus serving as a means to assert nationalism, are documented in several places across the ten volumes.

Search and Discovery

Unlike most of his contemporaries, Heinrich Witt perceived the end of nonrenewable assets and what it meant for local interests and for the country, together with the presence of foreign interests. In addition, he had a keen eye in detecting local inventiveness when it came to, for instance, turning salt water into potable sweet water, in 1843. Witt went ashore in Iquique on January 11, 1843, in a visit to an old acquaintance from Arequipa, Don Manuel Baltazar de la Fuente, a nitrate exporter and owner of the Guantajaya silver mine. Baltazar de la Fuente's accountant/clerk was Juan de Dios de Arauzo, a cousin of Witt's wife. Observing his surroundings, Witt noticed that "with the exception of fire wood in the vicinity in Iquique as in Cobija not a single article, not even the most indispensable for the sustenance of life [850] was produced on the spot," even water had to be shipped in in two masted boats. Most supplies came from Europe in the form of wine, spirits, hams, preserved meats in exchange for (in 1864) nearly 2,000,000 quintals of nitrate. The main exporters of nitrate were Anthony Gibbs & Sons and Gildemeister & Co. Silver "papas" (sometimes weighing as much as 30 quintals) were smuggled to Europe, and to "convey it through the surf, fragile but buoyant boats or 'balsas' as they are called were used. They consisted of two inflated sealskins, lashed together, a board fastened between them, at its narrow point a Cholo who paddled (and impelled) the raft through the waters, behind him there was room for six persons sitting close together, and not moving." Likewise, he noticed that "for boiling and purifying the raw material [nitrate] much fuel is required, which in 1842 was still obtained from the shrubs which grew wild but already then it was feared, that they would in time be all consumed, and so it came to pass." Shrubs were replaced with imported charcoal. In the meantime a certain Diego "had just put up a machine for converting salt water into sweet, this was at the time a great novelty, I went to see it, it worked on a small scale, its cost had been no more than \$ [pesos] 400. It produced daily 640 bottles of sweet water consuming three arrobes of coal."

He added that it tasted “insipid” but was free of salt (1:618–620 [848, 849, 850, 851]). Water supply to Islay came by means of an underground iron pipe from an olive grove a league distant. Three foreigners (C. W. Schutte, Lewis Auregan, and Ferdinand Le Platinier) by virtue of a contract with the Peruvian government had built the iron pipe and a “mole resting on iron pillars driven into the solid rock” to facilitate the loading and unloading of ships and passengers.

What Heinrich Witt witnessed at the borders between Bolivia, Chile, and Peru is what has been defined as a typical enclave within the international division of labor, with no linkages inside the economy of any of the three countries, aside from, maybe, some consumption linkages in the form of salaries paid to the nitrate workers; some very low fiscal linkage, by way of the contract with the mole and iron pipe builders; and a dismissible forward linkage in the form of the inflated sealskins, the *balsas*. In this scenario, when the Peruvian government decided, as a result of the financial crisis of 1872, to levy export taxes on nitrate and therewith increase the costs of production, there were good reasons to call on the Chilean army, take over the nitrate fields, and begin the plundering of Lima, another episode which is well described in Witt's diary volumes, including the bullet holes some of his neighbors found in the walls of their homes. To be sure, in scenarios like this, Witt's observations greatly differed from what the arguments and actions of Gibbs and the British consuls were, reports on which, in part, our contemporary wisdom on the War of the Pacific relies.

Nitrate and War

Shortly before the War of the Pacific broke out, Witt registers a coup attempt by the Prefectos of Puno and Arequipa against President Prado. “Last night's ‘Nacional’ contained a dispatch signed by Pantaleon Falconi, chief of the gendarmes of Puno, from which it appeared that the two Prefectos, Quiñones of Puno, and Suarez in Arequipa, had been evidently conspiring against the President Prado, and that their machinations had been crossed by the unexpected opposition of Falconi and his gendarmes” (8:512 [740], entry of Wednesday, September 9, 1878). Soon, Witt also saw the rise of eminent conflict between Chile and Bolivia concerning the nitrate fields he had visited in earlier years. When Bolivia's president Daza insisted upon levying a ten-cent tax on exported nitrate, the company sought the backing of the Chilean government, and Bolivia's minister of foreign affairs, Reyes Ortiz, arrived in Lima “on an extraordinary mission.” “A rupture between Chile and Bolivia seemed unavoidable” (8:584, 585 [856], entries of Friday, February 14, 1879, and Monday, February 17, 1879). In Lima the “general opinion was in favor of Bolivia. J. A. Lavalle had been named to go on a special mission to Santiago de Chile to act as mediator between the contending parties [sic] if a reconciliation could still be brought about” (8:586 [860], entry of Friday, February 21, 1879). On Monday, February 24, 1879, Witt read extracts of Chilean papers republished in the *Nacional*, all of them “without exception urged the Chilean Government to energetic measures against Bolivia. The Government of this Republic [Bolivia] had ordered the Salitreras to be valued and to be brought to the hammer, because the owners had refused paying the ten cents duty. The territory between the 23 and 24 south latitude, which contained the salitreras, had been ceded by Chile to Bolivia in 1866, and the limits rectified in 1874” (8:588, 589, 592, 593, 594 [862, 864, 869, 870], entries from February 24, 1879, February 27, 1879, March 5, 1879, March 7, 1879). Chile proceeded to occupy Caracoles, Tocopilla, Antofagasta, and Mejillones. From Bolivia, the “papers contained the proclamation of Hilarion Daza, President of Bolivia, and articles from La Paz newspapers. They were filled with expressions of the most eccentric patriotism, and with bitter invectives against the Chilean nation and the Chilean Government” (8:594 [873], entry of Monday, March 10, 1879).

Such was the buildup of animosities read through Witt's eyes, by piecing together news received and what he himself observed. He followed up on events between March and December 1879 with lengthy entries, ranging from [5] to [239], followed by entries from January 1880 to December 1880, ranging from [245] to [755], and from January 1881 to May 1881, [764 to 782], ending with the occupation of Lima [871].

Amid Ongoing Conversations

One final line of Witt's life and thoughts I would like to call attention to is how Heinrich Witt was, throughout his entire life, a bridge between Europe and the Andes, conveying news on political developments from one side of the Atlantic to the other by his letters and personal conversations with Andeans in Europe (mainly Paris), aside from his visits with family members, acquaintances, and business partners. Witt knew Don Domingo Elías, who according to him was “a native of Ica, in the neighborhood of which place he possessed much landed property producing wine, brandy, and cotton.” In 1846, seven years after the Confederation had ended, he remembered that during the long sojourn his family made in Paris, General Santa Cruz, at the ball given at the Tuileries, presented Rosa Elías, Domingo's eldest daughter, to Napoleon III, with these words: “The daughter of the richest landed proprietor in Peru who will be the next President” (3:585 [841]),

which actually almost happened. In his entries covering Witt's residence in Lima from October, 28, 1852 to August 11, 1854, referring to Elías: "His numerous family, his expensive way of living, and, above all, the large sums spent in political intrigues must have been the cause of his pecuniary difficulties which in 1849 rose to such a height that he was under the necessity of calling his creditors together. I myself was one of them [...]. Several concessions were made to him on the express condition that henceforth he should abstain from meddling with politics, but though he gave his word to this effect already towards the end of the same year 1849 his friends Francisco Quiroz, Jose Sevilla, and Francisco Gonzalez de Prada were using all their efforts to secure his election for the Presidency of the Constitutional period of four years to begin in April 1851" (6:19 [19]). Domingo Elías alone is mentioned in Witt's diary at least ninety times throughout volumes 1, 2, 3, 6, and 10.

Tensions between Peru and Bolivia were carefully registered by Witt; his comments kept pace with state formation in the Andes. As a consul himself, he kept a close watch at the exchange of ideas and actions of consuls—a thermometer of the international maneuverings—and he had a clear sense for when the diplomatic tones were close to military action. As an avid reader of the news coming from across the borders and a close eyewitness of what he saw happening from his own balcony, Witt produced an extraordinary mixture of lived and observed historical experiences. Physically he was in neither Ecuador nor Bolivia in 1865, but he saw with his own eyes the brawls between the Spanish sailors and the "pueblo," in as much as he and his family were awakened "by the firing of musketry" on November 6, 1865. Prado's army had entered Lima and was attacking the palace, a bullet hit Witt's balcony, Prado's soldiers ascended the roofs of the neighboring houses while firing on the defenders, his neighbor minister Noboa climbed from his balcony onto Witt's, "not considering himself safe in his own dwelling," and had breakfast, "a very poor one, for neither the milkwoman nor the baker had come, nor our coach ventured out to the market; it consisted of chocolate, boiled in water, boiled eggs, and Albert biscuits," all the while a ransacking of the palace "not by the soldiery but by the rabble" was happening, literally, next door (6:581, 582 [705, 707, 708], entry of Wednesday, October 25, 1865). The revolutionary takeover was followed by several repressive measures, lawsuits against high officials in the Pezet administration, administrative cuts and reductions in the pensions granted to widows, and cancellation of positions. With empty fiscal coffers a desperate search for fiscal revenues ensued: sale of useless ships, reforms in the state structure and municipal and burial practices, the reintroduction of a capitation tax "upon all male Peruvians from age 21 to 60, divided into three classes, paying per month from 10 down to 2 rials each" (6:585–599 [711–722]).

Not without a fine dose of irony, after all that had happened throughout 1865, in February 1866 Witt described the fireworks, military music, and the bright illumination of Lima following a proclamation of Lima's Prefecto ordering that Tuesday, February 27 and Wednesday, February 28 should be celebrated as civic holidays to "solemnize the quadruple alliance of Peru, Chile, Bolivia, and Ecuador, against Spain, as well as the victory said to have been gained at Ancud in Chiloe by the Peruvian men of war and the Chilean fortifications over two Spanish men-of-war" (6:603 [734]). The external enemy had brought the quarreling countries together, and Witt found himself sitting at the dining table with Prado and Castilla in February and on July 28 in celebration of Peru's day of independence (6:599, 617 [729, 752]).

Colonel Prado, now Peru's constitutional president, issued a series of decrees. Both the capitation decree and the pension cuts brought about an indigenous rebellion in the provinces of Huancañé and Azángaro, in departamento Puno, while in Arequipa a new constitution article (the 24th) granting full liberty of education provoked the ire of the "fanatic ladies in Arequipa, of whom there are a good many [as Witt well knew!], looked upon this as contrary to the doctrines of Holy Mother Church," followed by the "populacho" (6:655 [805] and 6:674 [828], respectively).

The fracas between 1838 and beyond reached, according to Witt, the relationships between the wives of the contending parties, to which Heinrich, but also his wife, listened carefully, while he also made it part of his networking scheme through continued visits in Lima and Chorrillos. On April 2, 1848, while in Chorrillos he visited with Doña Pancha Rocafuerte de Rico and some of her grandchildren, and also with Doña Jesus Armero, "with whom I was in good terms, though my wife and she had, many years back, in the year 1838, quarrelled about politics, the latter was a friend to the cause of Santa Cruz and Orbegoso, whilst Mrs. Armero's political bias was toward the Chilean invaders and their Peruvian adherents Gamarra, La Fuente and others. Mrs. Armero was by herself, her husband and children having gone on a picnic party to the neighboring village of Surco, together with General Lafuente and family" (4:160 [181]).

It is only through this kind of comment that we learn how in daily interactions the political rivalries survived and were remembered and reproduced at the household level.

Heinrich Witt and Andrés de Santa Cruz in Paris: An Ongoing Conversation?

When in Paris in 1851, Heinrich Witt paid a visit to General Santa Cruz, who did not recognize him and Schutte, who was with him, “but he not knowing or not recognizing I had to introduce ourselves which is a very disagreeable task” (4:558 [707], entry of June 10, 1851). However, only a few days later, when Witt and his wife were absent from home, Santa Cruz called and “had inquired for my wife and myself, and on being told by the servant that Mr. Schutte was upstairs, had merely left a card for him, not even one for Rosa [Schutte's wife]. This was certainly very rude on the part of the General, and by no means in harmony with his well-known character for politeness. Schutte was much incensed, as he well might be” (4:560 [710], entry of June 12, 1851). The next time Witt encountered Santa Cruz was during a “big dinner” at Duquenne's, with a total of sixteen guests. As in several other scenarios, for Witt and the protocol in the nineteenth century (and beyond!), it was very important who was seated next to whom, expressing hierarchies and, often as well, sending messages. At this particular dinner, General Santa Cruz was seated to Madame Duquenne's right, and General Pacheco to her left. Pacheco was at that moment in the service of the Republic of Uruguay and sent by his government to retard, if possible, the ratification of a treaty recently concluded between the French Republic and that of Buenos Aires, under “notorious” President Rosas. At this dinner, Witt also met a partner of Duquenne's, a rich banker and “a manufacturer who had obtained the patent for gilding and silvering by galvanism; also a member of the Chamber of Deputies, who formed one of the commission who had to give its opinion on the treaty between France and Buenos Ayres, and with whom Pacheco had many long conferences.” Furthermore, Witt describes, “My right hand neighbor Mons. La Fond was [714] too talkative, he had been on the West Coast between the years 22 and 26, and had been acquainted with my wife in Arequipa immediately after Von Lotten's death.” And, “I also spoke a few words with General Santa Cruz, generally in Spanish, he was however much reserved. French seemed easy to him, but his accent was that of a true Serrano” (4:562 [712, 713, 714], entry of Thursday, June 12, 1851).

Through these encounters in Paris, Witt kept informed of what was happening not only in Europe but also in Latin America, mainly through personal encounters and invitations. Moreover, especially the encounters with Santa Cruz allowed him to witness very closely who Santa Cruz was and how he continued his political participation from afar after his exile. On June 18, 1851, the day after the Tuesday visiting day, Santa Cruz and his family in the company of the Escobars and Witt's wife found themselves visiting Le Petit and Le Grand Trianon, two palaces in the park of Versailles. Witt recalled how he had first met Doña Panchita back in 1827, when they together played Carnival in Arequipa. Witt came to know Pachuca, the daughter of Doña Eulalia Camara, “intimately” at Doña Eulalia's home (this is mentioned in 1:233 [283]). She became General Santa Cruz's wife. Doña Panchita did not remember her Carnival encounter with Witt, as she repeatedly told Witt's wife during their Paris reencounter, whereas “since she had become the wife of Santa Cruz, I had never referred to it” [4:573 [730]].

During these June days in Paris, the Santa Cruzes and the Witts grew closer to each other. Two days after their joint walk through Versailles, the Witts were invited to dinner at the Santa Cruzes; “my wife and I accepted. Mr. and Mrs. Schutte declined the invitation. The former was still indignant at the General's want for politeness [...]. He was right in not going himself, but wrong in not allowing our taking the children with us; [...] The General took my wife to the dining room, I, his lady. Two seats were unoccupied, Corina and Amalia having been expected, and Santa Cruz seemed somewhat annoyed at their absence” (4:575 [733]). The schism between the Schuttes and Santa Cruz, in spite of Witt's participation, outlasted the joint visit at Paris. In the wake of the final goodbye visits on August 6, 1851, and in the carriage of the Duquennes, “we called upon a Cuzco lady, La Señora Echegaray, not at home, then upon the Santa Cruzes. Mrs. Santa Cruz was in, and showed us all over her handsome house and garden. Schutte and Duquenne remained in the carriage” (4:632 [820]). The Witts and Schuttes were on their way to London. The Santa Cruzes followed shortly thereafter.

Back in Paris—after Santa Cruz had dissuaded the Witts from traveling to Spain because the travel by “diligence” was horrible, especially for a lady—they visited again: “The Santa Cruzes and Riva Agüeros called [...]. Wednesday after dinner I took a cab and drove with my wife to Mrs. Echegaray and Mrs. Bedoya, neither of whom was in, thence to Santa Cruz's: here we found the whole family at home, with them were, Mrs. Riva Agüero and her daughter Caroline, also Doña Jesus Bedoya, an elderly lady, known to all Peruvians who visit Paris for her extremely kind and serviceable disposition. Santa Cruz himself was on the point of driving out to pay his new-years respects to Louis Napoleon; he was accompanied by Montero his Secretary, Brandon his attache, and Simon his son. In his splendid uniform [...] he looked quite imposing [...] [191]

his appearance was much improved and he might almost be called good-looking, notwithstanding his dark Indian complexion" (5:81 [190, 191], entry of Monday, December 20, 1851). Santa Cruz as a member of the diplomatic corps "had several seats at his disposal in the Cathedral of Notre Dame where high mass was about to be said and a Te Deum sung to celebrate Louis Napoleon's election as President for ten years, and accordingly my wife drove to the said church with the Santa Cruzes and the Riva Agüeros. She told me on her return that the solemnity had been splendid, and she thought that from the countenance of those present, she could judge of the general satisfaction which this election had given" (5:82 [192], entry of Thursday, January 1, 1852).

Through Santa Cruz, the Witts participated in the full splendor of a Parisian historical moment. Curiously enough, in all the different encounters and conversations, even at the family level, there is not a single mention of past historical moments. What was Santa Cruz thinking in the early 1850s about politics past and present in the Andes? With an informant like Witt on his side, it is hard to imagine how Santa Cruz could not have had an opinion; they had two languages in common, Spanish and French. The only opinion Witt transmits in his diary pertaining to Santa Cruz is what he thought about life in Europe: "General Santa Cruz used to say that three things were required in Europe especially in Paris viz., 'Bolsa abierta, Pasos largos, y el paragua bajo el brazo'" (4:626 [810], entry of July 29, 1851). However, entries on Santa Cruz at later dates clearly reflect an ongoing political conversation.

Toward the end of the 1850s the former independence fighters were getting old and dying. A person like Alexander von Humboldt, whose traces Witt followed closely, completed his eighty-ninth year on September 14, 1858, and "he was still strong both in body and intellect, and had just finished his book called the 'Cosmos'" (5:277 [498], entry of November 15, 1858). Don Pio Tristan, a native of Arequipa, died in Lima "at an advanced age and after a protracted illness. [...] He served in the Spanish and afterwards in the Peruvian army; after the battle of Ayacucho he was the last Spanish viceroy, when his rule did not extend further than the Department of Cuzco, and hardly lasted a fortnight; again when Perú and Bolivia were united under the Protectorate of Santa Cruz, he was for some time President of South Peru [while Luis Orbegoso was president of North Peru]." Witt attended his funeral, which took place on August 27, 1859. After the funeral Heinrich Witt "called upon General Braun now an old man, who in his youth and prime of life fought for the Independence of Perú at Junin and Ayacucho. He afterwards entered the Bolivian service which country he abandoned when the lofty edifice built by the Protector Santa Cruz came to the ground. He told me that in every battle in which he had fought he had been on the victorious side. His first wife was Justa Rivera of Arequipa, his second a native of Hesse-Cassel" (5:369, 370 [626, 628], entries of August 5, 1859, and August 27, 1859).

In Heinrich Witt's memory and diary, Santa Cruz's political project survived through the recapturing of life histories as these appeared and combined over and over again before Witt's eyes. In this scenario it might be worth remembering that it was in 1859 or 1860 that Witt began to actively and systematically compose his memoirs. Still, his memories were with him when he visited with Santa Cruz in Paris and London at the beginning of the 1850s, and maybe it was the dialogue with Santa Cruz over the longer haul that also, in a sense, supported Witt's memory.

Heinrich Witt's life after the War of the Pacific became much more domestic. Although he was still a lively reader of news from all over the world and he kept up his visits, conversations, and observations, his diary entries become shorter and more limited, maybe in tandem with politics in the Andes, which finally had settled into more tranquil times. All along, though, beginning in 1824, he had accompanied and connected with very different political characters and economic agents from his unique vantage point as a German merchant, a member of the Arequipa elite, and a participant in many conversations in Europe and the Andes. His diary is worth being called a nineteenth-century archive.

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