



[www.senado2010.gob.mx](http://www.senado2010.gob.mx)

[www.juridicas.unam.mx](http://www.juridicas.unam.mx)

## NEW DIRECTIONS AND METHODS IN HISTORICAL INVESTIGATIONS

PETER BOYD-BOWMAN

Though I have had a life-long interest in history I am by profession a linguist rather than a historian, and all my ventures into the historian's field have been in search of solutions to primarily linguistic problems, such as the origins of dialect differentiations in American Spanish today.

These differences are attributable to a number of highly complex factors, among which I will mention only the regional (i.e. dialectal) origins of the early Spanish settlers of the New World, the rapidly changing features of Spanish as spoken during the last decade of the xvth century and much of the xvth, the interaction of Spanish and native tongues in certain parts of the New World, the varying degrees of contact with metropolitan Spain enjoyed by different colonies throughout the colonial period, and the linguistic contributions of immigrants from a number of European countries in the xixth and xxth centuries.

In some coastal or tropical areas the phonological influence of certain African languages may yet prove to have been significant, though this significance has not yet been adequately demonstrated.

The oft-noted phonetic division between two broad types of American Spanish, *highland* Spanish (marked by strongly articulated consonants and weakly articulated vowels) and *lowland* Spanish (where the reverse is the case), and the curious resemblance of the latter to the Spanish of Andalusia, gave rise to Max Leopold Wagner's ingenious but until recently unsupported climatological theory which held that emigrants to the New World tended to settle in areas whose climate most closely resembled that of their own native region in Spain.

It was to shed light on such disputed problems that I began, while still an instructor at Harvard in 1950, to analyze the regional origins of as many xvth century emigrants to the New World as I could uncover in the copious records of the period, taking into account such factors as parentage, exact year of departure, destination in America, occupation, social and marital status, and any additional important data that could be recorded without undue difficulty.

The information that I was able to assemble from xvth Century passenger lists and other sources proved to be so unexpectedly plentiful that my files now bulge with biographical information —including

in every case the place of origin— on over 45,000 individuals who had emigrated to America by 1580 alone.

This biographical data, together with statistical studies, demographic charts, maps and copious indices to facilitate use (surnames, place names, occupations, social status, and even expeditions in the New World), is the substance of a chronologically organized series, now in its fourth volume, entitled the *Índice geobiográfico de 40,000 pobladores españoles de América en el siglo xvi*. (The actual figure now exceeds 46,000 and may top 60,000 when I add volume v to complete the xvth century.)

Volume i features data on 5,481 emigrants during the Antillean period (1493-1519), volume ii data on another 13,626 who emigrated between 1520 and 1539, volume iii (complete but still awaiting its turn to be published) provides biographical data on 9,044 who emigrated between 1540 and 1559, while volume iv, which I have just finished within the last few days, offers data on 17,580 more who emigrated between 1560 and 1579. Each volume also contains a relatively small number of additional emigrants on whom information came to light too late to be included in the statistical analyses.

One of the principal facts to emerge from this demographic reference work is the leading and often overwhelming role played throughout the formative period of colonial society by the Andalusians and, not surprisingly, by the province and city of Seville. In a series of articles, both in Spanish and English, I have stressed the important part played by the Andalusian women in xvth Century America and the statistical evidence that both shipping and commerce were largely in the hands of merchants and sailors born or domiciled in Andalusia.

Evidence is piling up to support both the theory of an Andalusianized base for several of the American-Spanish dialects and incidentally Wagner's climatological theory also, for it is wellknown that New World ports were often more closely linked to each other by sea than they were with their own mountainous hinterlands, and it is precisely the maritime regions, whose pronunciation most strikingly resembles that of Andalusia, where my statistics are beginning to show that Andalusians settled in greater proportions than anywhere else.

Before leaving this subject I would like to remark that it is my overall impression, based upon the many tens of thousands of individual settlers examined, that the proportion of hidalgos and literate persons among those who emigrated to the New World was roughly the same, or perhaps even slightly higher, than among those who remained behind.

### *The LASCODOCS Project*

In the process of sifting through vast quantities of colonial records in search of biographical data for the *Índice geobiográfico de pobladores*, I had been much impressed by the unsuspected material waiting to be mined as well. These prosaic, non-literary documents, drawn from every region of Spanish America throughout the colonial period, might well hold the key to the early beginnings of dialect differentiations which are so evident today, for interspersed with archaic legal formulae can be found many indications of the colloquial language of earlier periods, recorded not only in the verbatim testimony of witnesses in law-suits, hearings, and trials, but also in private letters, contracts, minutes, confidential reports, commercial records, and countless other colonial documents. Most of these have the further unique advantage, from the linguist's point of view, of furnishing explicit information as to both authorship and place and date of origin.

With the aid of two grants from the ACLS totalling \$4,000, another grant from the Graduate School of SUNY at Buffalo in the amount of \$2,680, and 50 hours of IBM 7,044 computer time generously donated by our own computer center, I and a team of graduate assistants have in the past two years extracted, categorized, and key-punched well over 75,000 lexical, syntactical, and morphological items from xvth Century Mexico and the Caribbean area alone, each labeled as to source, reference, date and place of composition, and pertinent linguistic category. Enough of the contextual environment is furnished in each case to establish rather precisely both function and meaning. All computer output is arranged in two different formats: one (key words in alphabetical order) represents the first stage of what will eventually become the first, sorelyneeded *Dictionary of American Spanish on Historical Principles*. The other (linguistic categories) will form the basis for a large number of well-documented monographs such as the disputed chronology of distinctive sound changes, early nautical and mining terms, the use of diminutives and forms of address, word-formation, semantic changes, the penetration of Indian words into the daily speech of the colonists and the manner in which these words spread to other regions of America, and the emergence of regional peculiarities of every sort. Because of the way in which the data is being organized, numerous linguistic processes will be discernible for the first time and the erstwhile meanings of obscure or forgotten words brought into relief.

Only the last of nine computer runs is still needed to complete Phase I of the main project, which is the preparation of a *Vocabu-*

lario hispanoamericano del siglo xvi, but already the main project has generated a host of ancillary ones. In addition to a paper entitled "El español hablado en México en el siglo xvi", scheduled to be published in the *Actas del III Congreso de la Asociación Internacional de Hispanistas*, no less than two doctoral dissertations have been started to study some of the data already assembled. One of them proposes to examine the phonology of xvth Century Spanish colonial documents, the other the penetration of American Indian terms into the colonists' daily vocabulary. But since time is short and this is a meeting of historians rather than of linguists, I will not dwell here on our linguistic findings, interesting though they are, but will go on to enumerate other studies of a more definitely historical kind that LASCODOCS helped inspire. Curiously enough it was the relative dearth of unmodernized, paleographically reliable sources for LASCODOCS that rekindled in me an interest in paleography that had been dormant since 1956 and 1957 when I spent several months working with xvth Century passenger registries in the Archivo de Indias in Seville. Thanks to a collection of early documents from Nueva Granada owned by our library and some of the 60,000 rolls of archival documents already microfilmed by the Academia Mexicana de Genealogía y Heráldica, I and some of my Spanish research assistants have over the past two years transcribed with great accuracy the substantive portions of over 2,000 xvth Century documents, the majority of them executed in Puebla between 1540 and 1556.

The notarial archive of the Mexican city of Puebla de los Angeles, virtually complete from 1540 on, is a veritable treasure-house of information about social and economic life in the early colony. Many of its earliest documents are, however, in deplorable physical condition, unindexed and chronologically unorganized, which makes them extremely difficult and time-consuming to consult. In order to remedy this condition and make the archive more accessible to scholars both in Mexico and elsewhere, I have indexed and extracted from microfilm the substance of over 1,600 documents executed between 1540 and 1555. These will probably appear in a two-volume collection published by the Editorial Jus in Mexico City and entitled *Índice y extractos del Archivo de Protocolos de Puebla (1540-1556)*. The documents make fascinating reading. There are wills, dowries, contracts, law-suits, partnerships, promissory notes, rentals, powers of attorney, as well as bills of sale itemizing every imaginable kind of property from real estate to livestock to produce to general merchandise.

Though serious financial problems are delaying publication of the collection itself, the linguistic data from it has already been fed into the computer for use by LASCODOCS, one especially interesting list of merchandise has been published in translation (*Buffalo Studies*,

vol. iv, Aug. 1968, pp. 45-56) and another, featuring *inter alia* a library of theological books shipped from Spain to the Dominican monastery in Puebla, has been submitted to the *Latin American Research Review*. In addition, the collection was my source for an article appearing in this October's issue of *The Americas* entitled "Negro Slaves in Early Colonial Mexico: Based on Unpublished Manuscript Documents from Puebla de los Angeles (1540-1556)", in which I was able among other things to record the African tribal origins of 124 Negro slaves who were bought and sold in Puebla in the mid-sixteenth century.

My little historico-linguistic Latin-American colonial research center at Buffalo now occupies a converted classroom equipped with a seminar table, two large microfilm readers (one of them a 3-M reader-printer), three electric typewriters with international keyboards, a small but well-stocked library of historical and linguistic reference works, and a part-time staff of sixteen graduates and undergraduates, most of them native speakers. I teach a credit course for graduates, entitled "Paleografía hispanoamericana", which is equipping a growing number of students at Buffalo to do research in the colonial field.

Our most current grant-supported project is a reconstruction of Puebla's *vecinos* and their families as of the year 1554, based on copious information contained in the notarial archive material already extracted and indexed. With the valuable help of three graduate research assistants I am now tabulating the contents of all the documents up to and including the year 1554 with a view to determining the personal history of each *vecino* residing in Puebla in that year—his age, parentage, place of birth, relatives and friends, his occupation and other sources of income, his business investments and associates, his real estate, live-stock, merchandise, slaves, and the cost and location of his home. We also propose to examine the social, political and economic structure of Puebla in 1554, and do a demographic (i.e. statistical) analysis of various occupations, social groupings, and types of family.

My assistants and I have prepared and stencilled sets of biographical data sheets onto which information on each *vecino* is being systematically and chronologically entered for later evaluation.

It should be apparent from the foregoing report that in the course of my own basic research in Spanish American linguistics I have crossed the boundaries of various other disciplines. As a humanist my only excuse is that, in this age of ever-increasing specialization, the generalist's interdisciplinary training and broad cultural perspective may on occasion have something worthwhile to contribute.