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Ann Zulawski. *They Eat from Their Labor: Work and Social Change in Colonial Bolivia.* Pittsburgh, Penn.: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1995. xiv + 283 pp. $55.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8229-1183-8.

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Culture, Conflict, and Change in Colonial Bolivia

Ann Zulawski has finely crafted this study of the dynamics of colonialism in Bolivia. Zulawski deftly traces the interplay of culture and economics in two distinct (yet interrelated) ecological and economic niches: the highland mining center of Oruro, and the fertile foothills province of Pilaya y Paspaya. Both of these zones underwent tremendous economic and social upheavals during 1600-1725, the period which this work studies. The author's focus on labor allows her to address two matters of long-standing scholarly concern. What consequences did colonialism have for economic life? What did colonialism mean for the lives and cultures of the colonized (pp. 4-7)? Zulawski manages to address both of these questions simultaneously throughout the book. In so doing, she convincingly demonstrates that studies of culture and economics can and should engage one another.

From a coldly economic perspective, labor was the most elusive factor of production in both mining and agriculture. Following most recent studies of the Andean region, Zulawski argues that capitalism interacted with previous patterns of economic life rather than supplanting them. By the seventeenth century, she maintains, the majority of the population of the Andes "combine[d] remunerated labor with community agriculture" (p. 61). Like Bakewell (1984) and Cole (1985), Zulawski demonstrates that peasant cultivation "subsidized the silver industry" (p. 69) by providing miners at Potosi and Oruro with food their wages were too low to purchase. As economist Alain DeJanvry (1981) has observed for Latin America as a whole, cheap food subsidized export-sector profits.

The primary value of this book, however, lies in its exploration of the wide variation possible within just one industry in one part of the region. Zulawski well documents just how markedly the development of silver mining in Oruro differed from that of Potosi. Aside from the work of Cornblit (1995), reviewed here recently, colonial Oruro has hardly been studied. Potosi is another matter. It has been the subject of a number of works. Potosi is perhaps best known today among historians for its infamous forced labor draft, the *mit'a*. The colonial state obliged the villages in the sixteen provinces surrounding Potosi to send a portion of the male population to toil in the mines. The workers recruited by the *mit'a* were paid only a small wage. The *mit'a* helped the mining entrepreneurs of Potosi turn a profit because it supplied them with artificially cheap labor. Had they been obliged to pay wages high enough to attract and retain an entirely free wage labor force, the expression "es un Potosi" might not have endured in Spanish as a metaphor for fantastic wealth.

Zulawski makes this point very clear by her close examination of Oruro. Oruro was the second most important silver mining center after Potosi in the colonial Andes. Yet Oruro's Spanish mining magnates could not persuade the colonial authorities to provide them with cheap *mit'a* labor. The Potosi mines developed earlier, and the Potosi mine operators had a well-established lobby (p. 89). Furthermore, the Spanish state was hardly of one mind about the question of labor's place in colonial society. The author identifies two contesting views of labor which divided colonial Spain's policymakers. One group viewed coercion as a necessary and justifiable part of Spanish colonial society. The other group, termed "proto-liberal" by Zulawski, insisted that a free wage labor system was more efficient and more acceptable morally (p. 38). The *mit'a* itself was a compromise between slavery and free wage labor (p. 48). Viceroy Toledo himself, the inventor of the Potosi *mit'a*, attempted to suppress the institution of *yanaconaje*, a form of coerced labor common in the agricultural zone of Pilaya y Paspaya (p. 76).

The absence of the *mit'a* obliged the mining entrepreneurs of Oruro to pay higher wages than did their Potosi counterparts. They even had to offer supplements

of bread, coca, and wine to their workers (p. 93), and tolerate a certain amount of ore-sharing, or direct appropriation of silver ores (p. 86). Some indigenous workers even managed to establish small-scale mining and smelting operations, much to the anger of the Spanish mine owners. Only a steady decline in production beginning in the mid-seventeenth century served to lower the wages of the Oruro workers, and even then, they were better paid than their counterparts in Potosi (pp. 104-105). According to Zulawski, wages in Oruro, especially in the early seventeenth century, were actually high enough to attract workers fleeing the Potosi *mit'a*. The absence of widespread forced labor in Oruro seems to have benefited the material conditions of the miners.

Or should I write, "mining families"? Zulawski contends that the family, not simply the male head of household, was the true provider of labor for the Spanish colonial project. In contrast to Silverblatt (1987), she finds little evidence that women were more universally exploited than men. Nor does she conclude, as did Burkett (1977), that women managed to manipulate and benefit from colonialism more than did men (p. 156). Clearly, gender dynamics changed with colonial development, but on Zulawski's view, this change was complex and varied greatly from case to case.

In sum, this work is an important contribution to our understanding of the cultural and economic dynamics of colonialism in the Andes. It joins the fine company of the works already cited, as well as that of other recent studies of Bolivian history by Jackson (1994), Langer (1989), and Larson (1988). It will be of value not just to specialists in Andean and Latin American history, but also to those who seek to understand labor in other colonial settings.

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