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 **Rituals of Respect: The Secret of Survival in the High Peruvian Andes (review)**

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REVIEW

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Book Review

Rituals of Respect:

The Secret of Survival in the High Peruvian Andes

***Rituals of Respect: The Secret of Survival in the High Peruvian Andes.* By Inge Bolin.** (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998. xxii + 289 pp., preface, introduction, illustrations, glossary, bibliography, index. \$35 cloth, \$16.95 paper.)

People from Chillihuani appear appropriately early in this book about them. They have come down to Cusipata in the Vilcanota Valley in early February 1988 to gather provisions. They are conspicuous highlanders in the valley town and, according to Inge Bolin, never stay long. The upper limits of the herders' home community, a dispersed "village" of about fifteen hundred Quechua-speakers in the province of Quispicanchis (department of Cusco, in the south-central Andean region of Peru), reaches over 16,000 feet above sea level. Bolin presents Chillihuani as a world apart, an antithesis of Cusipata (where over the course of centuries, native peoples were forced into, co-opted toward, or otherwise embraced, various cultural changes), and the confirmation of "a general rule, the more inaccessible a region, the purer the precolonial components" (31). Once the gathering party have fulfilled their needs, they climb back up to Chillihuani to continue preparations for their eight-day celebration of *Pukllay* (or Carnival week). It is much the same every year, except that this time the herders return with an anthropologist.

Bolin lived among the people of Chillihuani intermittently between 1988 and 1996. And she offers here a well-written and deeply felt account of her experiences and a portrayal of the resilience of Chillihuani's people in a harsh environment and through centuries of unfavorable conditions. Without denying their crushing poverty and extreme vulnerability, Bolin stresses the culture of serenity and respect and, in Robert Randall's words, the "emphatic continuity" she found among them (156).

Bolin organizes her study especially around festive and special occasions. Her exquisite attention to the people's words and actions (described most often in and through their own Quechua language) makes a great variety of rituals come alive, from the different aspects of the major festival of *Pukllay* to the subtle gestures with which a *chasqkiq* (young man elected to perform public rituals) manages the offering, passing, and ingesting of drinks on Peru's Independence Day. Much of this book reads like a memoir composed during days and nights spent within her hosts', the Mamanis', home. It is an intimate and generous portrait, full of people with names and characters and also alpaca hides, coca leaves, scurrying *cuyes* (guinea pigs), and the ceremonial corral just outside. Bolin's three chapters [End Page 767] on the ritual stages of love, courtship, and relationships toward marriage in Chillihuani struck this reader as particularly sustained and valuable. Other principal engines in the book are the author's accounts of the journeys the people regularly make through the land, such as the eyewitness relation of her companions' climb and ritual approach to Waqraqocha, a divine and life-giving lake high above the village.

More controversial is Bolin's decision to feature more than analyze the Chillihuani's representations of themselves and their ritual actions as essentially unchanging from Inkaic and even pre-Inkaic times. She knows the relevant chroniclers but chooses not to don a historical ethnographer's hat in order to consider, alongside fragments of surviving documentation from the intervening centuries, what is personally being said and remembered. Centenarian Roberto Yupanqui Qoa's esteem for his ancestors' traditions, and his invocation of a past inhabited by vanquished Inkas and Spanish repression, deserve the respectful attention Bolin grants them. Yet they also are statements made in a here-and-now and, thus, like most human utterances, are selective puzzles within which much may lie concealed—unconsciously as otherwise. Yupanqui Qoa, having recourse to what appears to be a complex blend of Andean reference points, did not seem satisfyingly described as "little tainted by the ideology of the conquerors and their successors" (10).

It becomes a question, perhaps, of how one chooses to...

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