

On the whole, the book deserves to be read as an introduction to the dynamics of population in Mexico.

Centro de Estudios de Población-CENEP
Buenos Aires

ALFREDO E. LATTES

Estado boliviano y ayllu andino: Tierra y tributo en el norte de Potosí.

By TRISTAN PLATT. Preface by HERACLIO BONILLA. Lima: IEP Ediciones, 1982. Maps. Notes. Tables. Appendixes. Bibliography. Pp. 197. Paper.

In each of the Andean countries, the *ayllu* is an institution that looms large in the popular image of history. This fact might lead one to imagine that it had been studied in great detail and was understood in various ways at different times. Ironically, there are strikingly different views about what the *ayllu* was and is, but they are generally vague caricatures that have little grounding in historical or ethnographic research. The widespread image of the *ayllu* in Inca times as an idyllic communal kibbutz is as inaccurate in many respects as the equally widespread image of the *ayllu* in the late eighteenth century as a hotbed of nativistic revolutionary fervor. Both of those views differ markedly from twentieth-century imagery, which tends to emphasize either the analogy of a kin-based clan, or supposed continuity as a communal land grant that had been specially chartered by the crown. As is usually the case with popular interpretations of social institutions, there is an element of accuracy in each of those, and yet none comes close to doing justice to the complexity that is revealed by a case study.

Tristan Platt's approach to the study of the *ayllu* is different, and his findings are fresh, impressive, and important. Not only does he look at this generally neglected institution in detail, but he does so in a region that has been neglected by historians; and he focuses on a period about which macrolevel historical writing is abundant but microlevel studies are exceedingly rare. In so doing, he illuminates not only the changing nature of the *ayllu*, but also our understanding of some of the impacts that national independence had on a plural society, and the ways in which laws and economic policies impinge on small communities. Although it is not explicitly couched in these terms, Platt's work is a fascinating case study of internal colonialism in an earlier era.

The northern half of Bolivia's Potosí Province had been a richly productive agricultural area throughout the period of Spanish domination; but it became impoverished as the newly independent nation-state emphasized

mining for export in a free-trade context. Large-scale imports of grain from neighboring countries quickly dominated the market, and epidemics disrupted the traditional demographic balance within small communities. At the end of the nineteenth century, the Guerra Federal (with Chile and Peru) led to a drastic revamping of the tax system and to the wholesale selling of titles to lands, including major portions of Indian communal holdings. This occurred on so large a scale that Platt refers to it as “the first agrarian reform,” a drastic series of laws that he traces in detail from 1874 to 1902. The traditional communities were not utterly dissolved, but “surplus lands” were calculated on the basis of tax-rolls that ignored the various categories of differential participation (such as *originarios*, *agregados*, *forasteros*, *colonos* et al.). Unlike the “second land reform” (in 1953), and despite official pronouncements to the contrary, such “development” did not benefit the Indians. The state lost its credibility with the Indians when it was seen as the agent of their eviction by criollo landlords, and sporadic uprisings ensued that gave the northern Potosí area the popular image of an untamed frontier. That historically inaccurate view, incidentally, was still strong in the 1960s, but Platt and his students, through meticulous historical and ethnographic research such as this, have done much in recent years to set the record straight.

Brown University

DWIGHT B. HEATH

BACKGROUND

The Quiché Mayas of Utatlán: The Evolution of a Highland Guatemala Kingdom. By ROBERT M. CARMACK. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981. Maps. Tables. Figures. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xviii, 435. Cloth. \$24.95.

This volume is truly a milestone for the complexity of data amassed and synthesized by Carmack during twenty-five years of field studies. It is also unparalleled for elucidating social, economic-ideological structures of an archaic state during various stages of development and ossification (A.D. 900s–1520s). Carmack demonstrates a superb grasp of cultural theory and a rare versatility by effectively integrating such diverse methodological