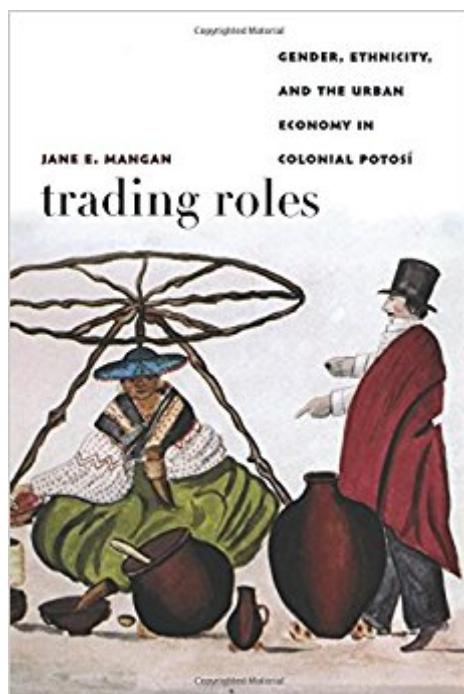


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# Trading Roles: Gender, Ethnicity, And The Urban Economy In Colonial Potosí-(Latin America Otherwise)



## Synopsis

Located in the heart of the Andes, Potosí was arguably the most important urban center in the Western Hemisphere during the colonial era. It was internationally famous for its abundant silver mines and regionally infamous for its labor draft. Set in this context of opulence and oppression associated with the silver trade, *Trading Roles* emphasizes daily life in the city's streets, markets, and taverns. As Jane E. Mangan shows, food and drink transactions emerged as the most common site of interaction for Potosinos of different ethnic and class backgrounds. Within two decades of Potosí's founding in the 1540s, the majority of the city's inhabitants no longer produced food or alcohol for themselves; they purchased these items. Mangan presents a vibrant social history of colonial Potosí through an investigation of everyday commerce during the city's economic heyday, between the discovery of silver in 1545 and the waning of production in the late seventeenth century. Drawing on wills and dowries, judicial cases, town council records, and royal decrees, Mangan brings alive the bustle of trade in Potosí. She examines quotidian economic transactions in light of social custom, ethnicity, and gender, illuminating negotiations over vendor locations, kinship ties that sustained urban trade through the course of silver booms and busts, and credit practices that developed to mitigate the pressures of the market economy. Mangan argues that trade exchanges functioned as sites to negotiate identities within this colonial multiethnic society. Throughout the study, she demonstrates how women and indigenous peoples played essential roles in Potosí's economy through the commercial transactions she describes so vividly.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

â œTrading Roles is a pioneering study. The mass of research Jane E. Mangan has put into the work is truly amazing. She makes the lives of the vast majority of the population of PotosÃ- come alive.â •â "Erick D. Langer, author of Economic Change and Rural Resistance in Southern Bolivia, 1880-1930â œTrading Roles is an unusually lively, detailed account of â 'the underdogsâ™ of a colonial Spanish American city. It draws attention not only to relatively invisible historical actors but to the rich texture of the deals and socially patterned expectations that brought them together.â •â "Kathryn Burns, author of Colonial Habits: Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peruâ œIn the historiography on colonial PotosÃ-, Manganâ™s work is distinctive for its concentration on the grassroots of daily market activities and mundane business dealings. . . . The great strength of Manganâ™s book is that she brings to life the world of the common vendors, artisans, merchants, and suppliers that made a great colonial city work.â • (Timothy E. Anna Colonial Latin American Historical Review)â œThis is a highly readable, well-argued study appropriate for courses on the urban economy as well as gender history. . . . [I]t does offer an inclusive and fresh approach to understanding how women and men of all ethnic groups came to create a colonial world in PotosÃ-.â • (Karen B. Graubart, Hispanic American Historical Review)

""Trading Roles" is an unusually lively, detailed account of 'the underdogs' of a colonial Spanish American city. It draws attention not only to relatively invisible historical actors but to the rich texture of the deals and socially patterned expectations that brought them together."--Kathryn Burns, author of "Colonial Habits: Convents and the Spiritual Economy of Cuzco, Peru"

Jane Mangan has exquisitely conveyed an interesting history of Colonial Potosi, and has woven together economic, gendered, racial, and social elements of life in and around the Potosi mines into a single narrative. This book is a must read for any scholar of the Andes.

great book

Trading Roles is a dense academic analysis of the trade economy, especially the economy of exchange in everyday articles such as food, drink, and clothing, in Potosi from c. 1545 to c. 1700. Mangan successfully crafts a "social history of economic practice" (p. 3) in this multicultural city,

which had a population of 160,000 by the early 17th century. One of her major themes is the centrality of credit, in the forms of loans and pawning, in Potosi's economy; I found the chapter on credit to be the most compelling section of the book. Mangan also does a good job of describing the social geography of Potosi and the different types of small businesses that existed there. Her treatment of women's economic roles, another major theme of the book, is somewhat less persuasive. Too often, Mangan takes refuge in puzzlingly, even amusingly, broad statements such as "Being a Spanish woman in Potosi could mean a variety of lifestyles" (p. 182) and "This book has argued that the everyday trading of Potosi's residents reveals the interplay between colonial social hierarchies and economic practice" (p. 179). She's at her best when she describes, in specific language, what actually happened and resists the temptation to self-consciously discuss her intellectual project. Despite these stylistic weaknesses, this well-researched book is a must-read for anyone who wants to understand economic and social life in colonial Potosi.

Good book!

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