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REVIEWS

Carolyn Dean, *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ: Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco, Peru* (Durham and London: Duke University Press 1999) 288 pp., ill.

Carolyn Dean's recent book, *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ*, follows the complex process through which the Catholic festival of the Corpus Christi was integrated into and used by indigenous Andean society in the Peruvian city of Cuzco, in the mid-sixteenth through the early eighteenth centuries. Drawing from numerous disciplines, including art history, anthropology, textual analysis, and subaltern studies, she describes the *semiophagous* nature of these ceremonies (meaning that they were dependent on the "otherness" of the colonized Andeans thereby "alienating" them and "enacting colonization") (1–2). However, this is not simply an account of about how religious ritual was used to subjugate minority groups. Dean is able to show how some Andeans used their role in these ceremonies to their advantage to enhance their own influence and prestige within their local community.

The central evidence in her work is a series of sixteen paintings commissioned by various patrons—some of whom were Andean nobles—when the Corpus Christi tradition reached its peak in the late seventeenth century. These paintings, each of which is reproduced in the book on a color plate, represent the various stages of the Corpus Christi pageant as it progressed through Cuzco. Dean combines a painstaking analysis of costume details and the positioning of the participants in the festival with her extensive knowledge of pre-Columbian Inka culture to produce a highly convincing argument. Contemporary accounts from Spanish colonizers and Christianized Andeans lend further support to her argument.

The book begins with a description of the role of Corpus Christi pageants in early modern Catholic Europe. This festival, which celebrated the doctrine of transubstantiation (the Catholic belief that the bread and wine used at mass become the actual body and blood of Christ), has its origin during the height of scholastic philosophy in the thirteenth century. Corpus Christi festivals enjoyed a revival in Counter-Reformation Europe because they symbolized the triumph of Catholic doctrine over heresy. It was especially important in Spain, where the theological triumph of Catholicism over heretics and infidels paralleled Spain's physical conquest over the Moors in the late fifteenth century. The ceremonial rhetoric of triumph was well suited for the Spanish conquest of the Americas, and the festival subsequently appeared in Peru almost immediately after it was conquered.

Because it was essentially a festival of triumph, Corpus Christi required the symbolic presence of a vanquished foe, or in Dean's terminology a "festive opponent"(15). In Spain people disguised as Moors and Jews played this role, while in colonial Peru it was played by native Andeans dressed in versions of their pre-conquest ceremonial garb. Yet while they played the role of the vanquished, some native Andean participants managed to use their ceremonial roles at the same time to negotiate for power within colonial Peruvian society. Their costumes contained pre-colonial symbols of authority that other Inka observers understood, and so they used their visible public role to communicate their status to other native Andeans. Thus elements of the Corpus Christi tradi-

tion were willingly adapted by the indigenous population for uses beyond those intended by the colonizing Spaniards.

Corpus Christi merged with native Andean culture so well partly because it co-opted many elements from preexisting religious festivals. The time of year in which Corpus Christi was typically celebrated (around May or June) coincided with the timing of an Inka harvest and winter solstice festival called Inti Raymi. Like Corpus Christi, Inti Raymi was a festival of triumph, in this case celebrating the victory of the sun and the end of winter in the southern hemisphere. Furthermore, the ceremonial spaces used for the Corpus Christi pageants in Cuzco were the same spaces that had been used for Inka ceremonies before the conquest. Most of the churches that the colonizing Spaniards built were modified from preexisting Inka religious structures, and much of the urban layout upon which the procession marched remained unchanged after the conquest.

The similarities between Catholic and Inka ceremonies were more than coincidental. Catholicism did not so much wipe out indigenous religious traditions in colonial Peru as much as it was deliberately and strategically grafted onto them. According to Dean, "Spaniards recognized the value of maintaining certain native reverential behaviors in an effort to shift adoration away from native supernaturals . . . to the Christian pantheon" (16). *Mestizo* chroniclers often drew an analogous relationship between Catholicism and the Inka religion, even to the point of arguing that the pre-colonial Inka religion prefigured Christianity.

As in Europe, the Corpus Christi festival in Cuzco was "an annual forum where various social groups and individuals . . . negotiated their public image" (61). In other words, Corpus Christi provided a space where the social hierarchy was put on display, and gave an opportunity for persons and groups to maneuver within it. The colonized Inkas understood this clearly, and while Spaniards invariably occupied the top of the hierarchical order, there was still enough room to jockey for influence within the lower ranks.

Inka participants in the Corpus Christi pageants dressed in modified versions of their ancestral ceremonial garb. For the Spaniards, this was in accordance to their role as the "festive opponent," while for the Inkas, it forged a link with the authority of pre-colonial royalty. "Through performed evocations of the past, Inka *caiques* [nobles] transformed their own bodies into vessels of Andean history. . . . Thus they alleged a continuity between pre- and postcolonial worlds, between the authority of their imperial ancestors and their own roles in local government. . . . The performance of ancestry also worked against rival Andean individuals and groups and become one of the primary mechanisms by which the colonial Inka elites asserted and maintained their positions at the top of the subaltern pecking order." (99)

Dean argues that the Inka nobles created a "mediative" role for themselves that they displayed in Corpus Christi rituals. This role was part of their "post-conquest identity" with which they mediated not only between the past and present, but between the Spanish colonizers and the Andean colonized. While they were not Spaniards, they occupied an elevated position in the Andean colonial hierarchy. Thus the mediative role they asserted for themselves "served to bolster Inka positions within, rather than challenge, the colonial

structure”(164).

Yet their post-conquest identity carried an inherent contradiction because it required the Inka nobles to simultaneously enact many things that were seemingly opposite: “They are Andean. They are Christian. They are Inka rulers. They are Spanish subjects” (159). The Inka nobles fashioned an identity that made them a link between the pre-conquest Inka world, and the post-conquest Spanish world, thereby allowing them to maintain their positions of influence. They represented the past, but in a way that was modified for the present. “In formulating a postconquest identity, they did not jettison their ethnicity, . . . rather, [they] flaunted it in such a way as to appeal both to their constituents and to their superiors. *Caciques* . . . could simultaneously commemorate a proud past and ‘fit’ their present, for it was owing to the past that they held status in colonial society” (165).

The Spaniards had conquered an ethnically diverse empire in Peru. When the Spaniards arrived, the Inkas had only recently asserted themselves over the other Andean groups, and consequently many ethnic rivalries were still alive. Thus Corpus Christi became a stage for competing notions of the past. Various ethnic groups used the rhetoric of triumph to allude to their own pre-colonial victories over rival groups, and they sought to share in the Spanish victory through claims that their ancestors were the first to ally themselves with their European conquerors. By vying for key positions within the Corpus Christi pageant, “Inkas, Canaris, Chachapoyas [two of the Inkas’ main rivals], and no doubt others, sought to authorize their competing versions of the past. This they did through festive performances that commanded the attention of Spanish colonial officials.” (197)

The dynamic Carolyn Dean presents in her work is not one of tension and resistance between the conquerors and the conquered, but rather one of hybridization in which each group found something in the Corpus Christi festivals that they could use to their own ends. The Spaniards used Corpus Christi to steer native religiosity toward Christianity, and to visually reinforce their dominance within the Andean social hierarchy. The native Andeans, on the other hand, used it to evoke their own past authority and to vie for prestige within the colonial community. Corpus Christi was a Spanish tool to Christianize the native Andeans, but in being used for this end the pageant became significantly Andeanized itself.

Carolyn Dean’s book is well thought out, clearly written, and beautifully illustrated. Her argument is well supported with a wide range of primary and secondary sources. Her approach is especially important at a time when many history programs throughout the United States are considering moving away from western civilization courses in favor of world history, because she balances both Spanish and Inka perspectives in this account of conquest and conversion. *Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ* will undoubtedly be of great interest and use to historians in almost any field.

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