
Yael Mabat’s timely monograph explores the history of Seventh-day Adventist missions in the Peruvian Altiplano department of Puno. Mabat’s work is divided into three parts focusing respectively on Native converts, missionaries, and their intertwined lives at the Lake Titicaca Indian Mission from the 1890s through the 1930s. Mabat is the first historian to devote an entire study to Adventists in Peru, a religious group that was the largest Protestant denomination in the Andes in the early twentieth century. In fact, by 1918, 1,300 Adventists lived in Puno, including 548 new baptized members, the highest baptism growth rate for the Adventist Church globally (121).

Part I traces the early history of why native Aymarans and Quechuans converted to Adventism, a religious denomination that condemned the chewing of coca leaves, carnivorism, drinking alcohol, the Catholic fiesta system traditions, and working on Sabbath Saturdays. Mabat examines census records to demonstrate how returning Native military veterans—Aymara and Quechua Indians were particularly affected by forced conscription—met Adventist missionaries in other parts of Peru or Chile and came back to the Altiplano as converts. As they dealt with land and water resource competition from large mestizo hacienda owners tied into the global wool market, many converts also later began forming coalitions for Indigenous rights, such as the Comité Pro-Derecho Indígena Tahuantinsuyo. Converts such as Manuel Camacho argued that instead of viewing Adventism as pulling away from their communities’ traditions, they were strengthening and regenerating notions of Indianness. Aside from their identity as veterans, many Adventists also had careers as teachers and expanded Adventist schools throughout the Altiplano, attracting non-Protestants as well.

The backgrounds and lives of US missionaries who lived in the Andes is the subject of Part II. Adventism came out of the Millerite movement in upstate New York and then quickly expanded in the 1850s to Battle Creek, Michigan where its headquarters remain today. Mabat argues that unlike other Protestant denominations who shared US goals of imperialism in their missionary work, Adventists often exuded anti-imperialist ideologies (90). Adventist missionaries also viewed

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overseas assignments as an opportunity to fulfill middle-class professional goals that eluded them in the U.S. since they often could not work salaried jobs at companies that expected employees to labor on Saturdays. While leaving the Midwest for the Andes might seem like a huge change for U.S.-born Adventists, many were already accustomed to rural farming life. Mabat relies heavily on the writings of US missionaries such as Ferdinand Stahl and Harry Wilcox to depict the personal sacrifice and even financial debt Adventists endured in the Andes as well as conflicts with the General Conference of Adventist Missions.

Part III focuses on the collaboration between Native converts and foreign missionaries at the Lake Titicaca Indian Mission. Mabat demonstrates how US missionaries shook up local racialized geographies by living with Natives, actions that mestizo hacendado owners condemned. This section richly shows how missionaries needed Native converts to help get the Mission organized and expanded. At the same time, Adventist converts could position themselves as part of the Peruvian national indigenismo project of uplifting the “new Indian” towards assimilation and modernization (54). Some of the relationships between Native Adventists and missionaries fractured over Indigenous rights organizations. Yet Mabat concludes that Adventist Native converts gained tremendous educational and leadership training, positioning themselves to become political elites despite a rejection of the political-religious carga system that historically governed their home communities. Ultimately, Mabat demonstrates how rather than thinking about conversion to Adventism as an act of religious self-denial, it also can be seen as a regenerative process by which Natives became less dependent on the Catholic Church and shook up local and regional power structures in the pursuit of more control over land and natural resources.

Sacrifice and Regeneration: Seventh-day Adventism and Religious Transformation in the Andes contributes richly to the lacuna of studies on Indigenous communities and Protestantism in the Andes. In particular, the histories of returning Native veterans to the Altiplano region is superbly researched. This study will be of great interest to students and scholars of religious studies, history, and sociology.

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En una esperada traducción al castellano de la edición inglesa de este libro publicada en 2020 (Cambridge University Press), Paulo Drinot propone una