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Nicholas Griffiths, *The Cross and the Serpent: Religious Repression and Resurgence in Colonial Peru*

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The Cross and the Serpent: Religious Repression and Resurgence in Colonial Peru. By Nicholas Griffiths. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996. xii + 355 pp. Illustrations, map, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. \$37.50 cloth.)

The increased maturity of Latin American studies is demonstrated by the quality of research and analysis in works such as that of Nicholas Griffiths. Tautly organized and gracefully written, *The Cross and the Serpent* explores with great insight the complex interplay of indigenous beliefs and Christianity in colonial Peru, focusing on what the author characterizes as a complex of submission and resurgence. Via cases involving charges of idolatry, superstition, witchcraft, and sorcery, he repeatedly illustrates the intense struggle between pre-Columbian beliefs and Iberian Catholicism. In doing so, Griffiths suggests the degree to which the former was able to survive and the latter was adapted. In short, the imposition of Christianity was much more

limited than has traditionally been thought.

Griffiths also highlights contradictory developments such as the coexistence on the part of ecclesiastic and royal officials of both triumphalism over the "spiritual conquest" and pessimism over the limits of evangelization. The author finds that indigenous worship actually grew during the course of the colonial period and served as a critical element of resistance to the inroads of Hispanic control. Hence, the campaigns of extirpation of the 1560s, 1609-1622, 1649-1670, 1690s, and 1725, never succeeded in realizing their objectives and, in some cases, reinforced indigenous beliefs. After 1725, belief in the necessity and possibility of extirpation declined on the part of both civil and ecclesiastic officials. Griffiths concludes that the majority of the indigenes eventually adopted their own version of Catholicism that was part substitution, part addition, and part synthesis which reinterpreted Christianity from within an indigenous cultural matrix. Native religion was used to adjust to the turmoil that conquest and long-term colonization precipitated, and extirpation, as a consequence, was part of an ultimately unsuccessful effort to uproot what was a major instrument of survival and resistance.

Griffiths disagrees with Irene Silverblatt's conclusion in *Moon, Sun, and Witches: Gender Ideologies and Class in Inca and Colonial Peru* (1987) that Spaniards regarded some indigenous religious practices as comparable to European witchcraft and hence targeted women practitioners. He argues that European views of witchcraft were not influential in the Indies, that charges of witchcraft were relatively rare, and that women were not singled out for special attention. As a consequence, he asserts that Silverblatt's contention that women, as religious practitioners, played a major role in the preservation of traditional Andean culture is not supported by the available evidence. This disagreement will hopefully generate additional dialogue concerning the actual role of indigenous religion and its practitioners in cultural resistance and retention.

Griffiths has discovered substantial new data in the Archive of the Indies, the Episcopal Archive (a National Library in Lima), the National Historical Archive in Madrid, and the Jesuit archives in Rome. As a result, he has substantially revised the common wisdom concerning the interplay of the religious beliefs of the conquered and conquerors in colonial Peru. Further research by others will no doubt result in additional revisions. Griffiths, however, has already established a benchmark for future research and analysis.

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