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### Linda Seligmann. Peruvian Street Lives: Culture, Power and Economy among Market Women of Cuzco.

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**Linda Seligmann. *Peruvian Street Lives: Culture, Power and Economy among Market Women of Cuzco.***

Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2004. x +264 pp. \$20 (paper), ISBN 0-2520-7167-0

*Reviewed by Linda Crawford, Ph.D., Department of Modern Languages, Salve Regina University, Newport, R.I.*

This text is primarily an anthropological study of the markets of Cuzco, Perú, but it is a useful text for Latin American studies as well. The discussion hinges upon the structure and operation of market society in Cuzco and is interwoven with anecdotes from many vendors and wholesalers. To elucidate her observations, Seligmann provides a brief history of Perú that includes the major events that shaped Perú's economic history, thereby creating the conditions for the markets as they exist today. Additionally, she explains quite clearly how Spanish and Quechua (the indigenous language spoken by many market vendors), as well as race and class, come into play in market society.

For historical and cultural reasons, market vendors in Cuzco, and in Perú, have traditionally been women; they have also been, traditionally, marginalized due to class, race, and gender. However, since they are savvy enough to recognize society's dependence on them, they find themselves simultaneously at both the margins and the center of urban life.

In Chapters 2 and 3, Seligmann outlines the historical and cultural forces behind the markets' development, then structures her treatment of the vendors by their role in market society. Chapter 4 deals specifically with wholesalers and their place in the market economy, while Chapter 5 discusses the importance of loan sharks and those who serve as intermediaries between the wholesalers and the market vendors. Each person's testimony is identified as that of an itinerant vendor, wholesaler, or permanent vendor, since her function in the market defines and explicates many of the positions and views expressed. All of these women find themselves at odds with each other from time to time. However, when the market is threatened by changes in government policy, the women band together to present a united front, fighting for their means of economic survival. In these first five chapters, Seligmann also details how each of these people, including the loan sharks, have carved out a niche in the market through her use of movement and space. In addition, she explains how women who are not second- or third-generation vendors come to participate in market life. Seligmann emphasizes that, while these women frequently work against each other, they all play a pivotal and irreplaceable role in market society.

Chapters 7, 8, and 9 explore how society defines the market vendors within the social system as well as how the market women define themselves. Seligmann found that, just as they move from one part of the countryside or city to another, these vendors have fluid definitions of their place in society, their class, their race, and their religion. In fact, such fluidity seems to be the locus of power for the market women: They are aware of society's need to relegate them to a particular space and keep them there. They are intelligent enough to play along with these stereotypes when necessary for business, but they also know when they can contest authority and do so. The final chapter recounts the

government's attempts to relocate the market and the vendors' ability to prevent the elimination of their means of survival.

The stories woven throughout the study and the fact that the text is jargon-free make *Peruvian Street Lives* an enjoyable read. Although Cuzco market life can seem chaotic and unstructured, as Seligmann herself notes, she has done a thorough study of all of the players and presents the material in an organized way. The discussions of race, religion, and gender roles in Peruvian women's self-definition, as Seligmann writes in several footnotes, can be extended to many members of society outside of the market sphere. Because this discussion can be expanded to other levels of Peruvian and even other South American societies, the text would be a useful addition to any collection on Latin American studies.