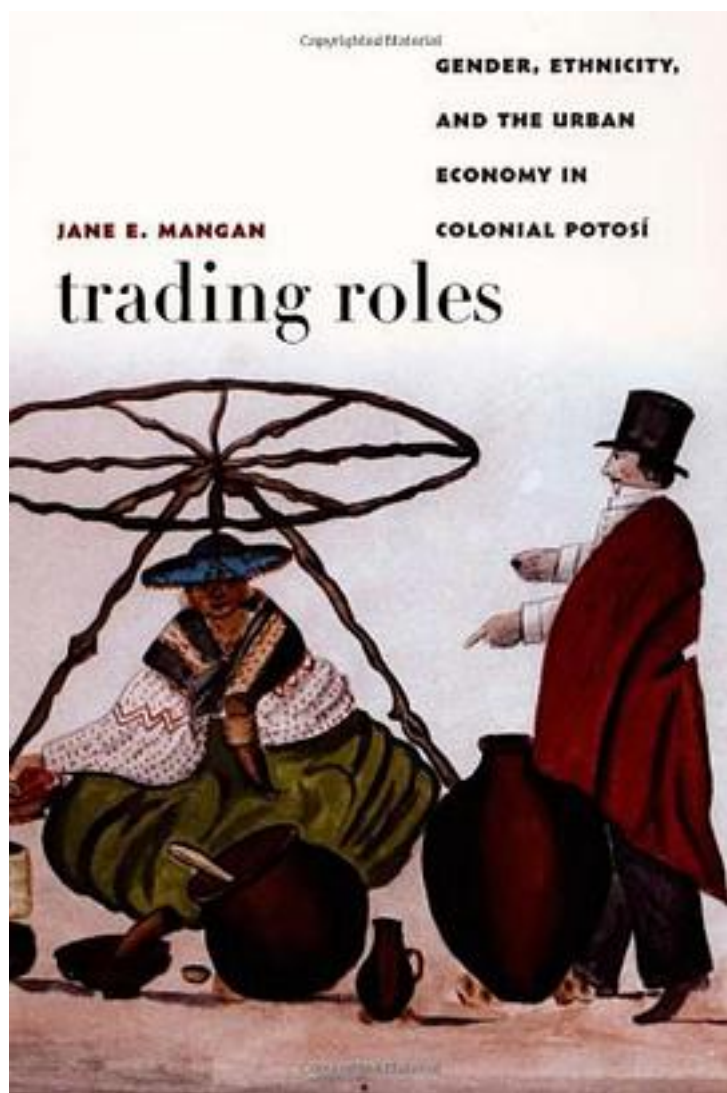


# Trading Roles



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出版者:Duke Univ Pr

出版时间:2005-5

装帧:Pap

isbn:9780822334705

Once part of Peru, now part of Bolivia, Potosi was arguably the most important urban center in the Western Hemisphere during the colonial period. It was internationally famous for its abundant silver mines and regionally infamous for its coercion of labor to work the mines. *Trading Roles* shifts attention away from the opulence and oppression associated with the silver trade to daily life in the city's streets, markets, and taverns. As Jane E. Mangan shows, within two decades of Potosi's founding in the 1540s, the majority of the city's inhabitants no longer produced food or alcohol for themselves; they purchased these items. Trade in food and drink emerged as the most common site of interaction for Potosinos of different ethnic and class backgrounds. In *Trading Roles*, Mangan presents a vibrant social history of colonial Potosi 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 dowry records, judicial cases, town council records, and royal decrees, Mangan brings the bustle of daily trade in Potosi alive. She examines quotidian economic transactions in light of social custom, ethnicity, and gender, illuminating negotiations over vendor location, 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. She demonstrates that women and indigenous people played essential roles in colonial Potosi's economy and that identities and relationships within the multiethnic society were negotiated in the daily commercial transactions she describes so vividly.

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