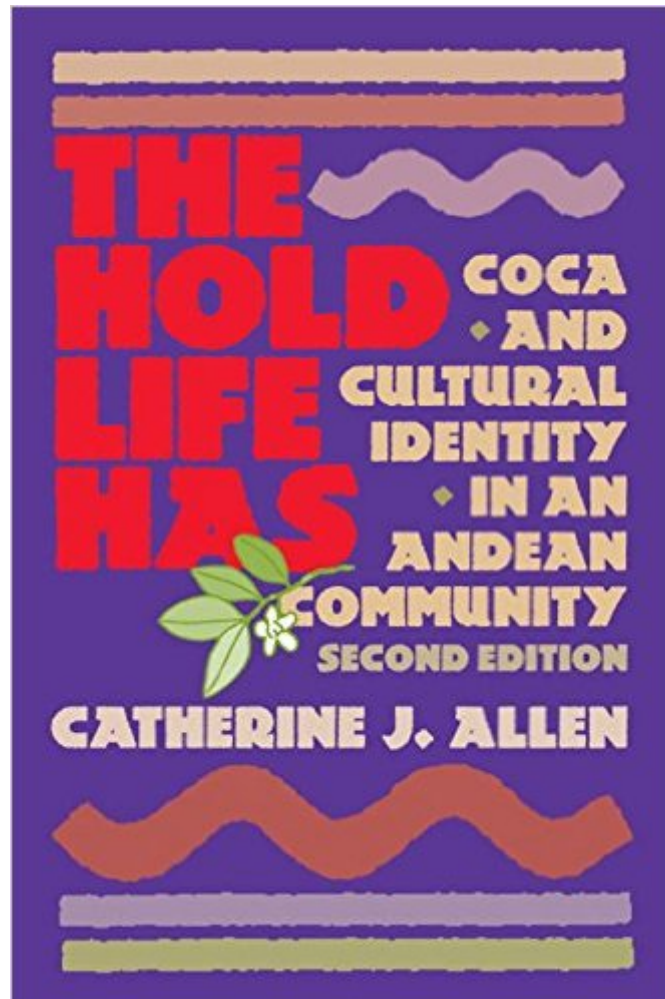


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The Hold Life Has: Coca And Cultural Identity In An Andean Community



Synopsis

This second edition of Catherine J. Allen's distinctive ethnography of the Quechua-speaking people of the Andes brings their story into the present. She has added an extensive afterword based on her visits to Sonqo in 1995 and 2000 and has updated and revised parts of the original text. The book focuses on the very real problem of cultural continuity in a changing world, and Allen finds that the hold life has in 2002 is not the same as it was in 1985.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a wonderful book written by an anthropologist who spent several years in an isolated Andean ayllu (community) located a good number of miles from the provincial center of Colquepata. The attraction of this book is that, unlike most authors responsible for the ever proliferating literature on Andean peoples and their practices, Allen actually lived with the Indians, participated in their ceremonies, potato planting, festivals and travels. The book provides priceless descriptions of the labor divisions between men, women and children and of the interactions between the runa (i.e., Qechua for "people") themselves, between the runa and the city-dwelling mestizos and, perhaps most poignantly, between the people and the land. The land for the Andean peasant is a living breathing organism that needs to be loved, feared and placated with gifts. Each and every horizon marker has a personality, every hill possesses power and there are spirit beings inhabiting different "power spots" from the time immemorial. The interactions between the people, the ancestors, the spirits and the land are part of the reality that needs to be reinforced every single day through little

rituals, such as greeting the sun as one steps out of the door early in the morning. Coca represented here part of the glue that held everything together. The rituals that underlie coca chewing bind people in a neverending cycle of mutual obligation; in addition, coca is used as a main ingredient of despachos (ritual offerings) and a source of quiet energy during exhaustive labor on potato fields.

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