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*Women's Place in the Andes: Engaging Decolonial Feminists*  
*Anthropology* by Florence E. Babb (review)

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***Women's Place in the Andes: Engaging Decolonial Feminists Anthropology.* By Florence E. Babb. Oakland: University of California Press, 2018, p. 304, \$34.95.**

In a work that could simply have served as a collection of her past studies of the life and work of indigenous Peruvian women, Florence Babb combines elements of a memoir, a critical analysis of the state of her field, and a historical overview of the evolution of that field since the 1950s to create an engaging and highly informative examination of both Peruvian gender culture and the discipline of anthropology itself. Her book makes clear why the study of gender matters both as a discreet field of interest and a critical component of any modern social science research.

Babb organizes her articles chronologically and by theme, introducing each section of the book with a commentary that provides the context for the work that follows by situating it within her personal experience as well as the overall academic context of the period. These reflections on both her lived experience and the prevailing perspective of the discipline often overlap. For example, she described the resistance she encountered at a meeting of the American Anthropological Association in 1984 when she argued for the inclusion of gender as a category of analysis in economic anthropology, and how one of her colleagues in particular had "let me know how little he thought of 'ladies, uh...specialists' doing research on gender and economic development and placed an unwanted hand on my knee" (146). Such personal experiences, while troubling to read and undoubtedly troubling to recall, serve to illustrate in no uncertain terms why the establishment of gender as a fundamental category of research was and remains critical. After describing the contemporary context for her articles, Babb then outlines her current thinking about the earlier work, contemplating its significance, impact, and what she would add now. For example, in the commentary for the second section of the book, which focuses on her studies of market women in Huaraz, she notes that her work has evolved from a strictly gender and political-economic focus to one that places greater emphasis on culture, adding a greater depth and complexity to the subjects of that study.

Indeed, perhaps the most significant theme of this book is the increasing complexity of defining the dimensions of subjects within the field of anthropology specifically and in the social sciences in general. In the first half of the book, for example, she takes on the concept of "complementarity," a word that is central to many studies of gender, particularly regarding the Andes. The word usually is used to describe a relationship in which labor and social roles are assigned in a gendered fashion, but this labor is not assigned greater or lesser value because of that gender distinction; rather, both sets of roles are recognized as distinct, but equally necessary and thus equally valuable to the community. Babb correctly points

out that the use of complementarity as a concept is, and continues to be, controversial because of the doubts as to its legitimacy as an accurate descriptor of gender relations within certain communities, and, consequently, because it could reinforce an image of an idyllic Native American past at odds with historical reality. Throughout this volume, Babb shows that while complementarity does not necessarily function as some of its earliest scholars suggested, it is nevertheless a useful way to discuss a social reality that was altered by the experience first of colonialism and then of economic modernization in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the case of colonialism, for instance, Babb describes the conflict between Native communities and the Catholic Church over the institution of trial marriage known as either *sirvinacuy* or *watanaki* that gave men and women an opportunity to find suitable marriage partners, but that the Church found to be a deviant practice to be expunged. In modern times, men ultimately had greater access to economic development assistance meant to benefit communities as a whole, contributing to a cultural perception that women were “more Indian” than men. In both cases, the result was greater gendered inequality. Nevertheless, Babb also shows how women’s access to the public marketplace and, more recently, the tourist industry, has afforded them a degree of control over and valorization of their lives and culture that may not have existed before. To be sure, this can be problematic, as in the case outlined in the conclusion, where Babb describes the controversy surrounding Andean women hired to weave cloth in the middle of a boutique store in Lima’s fashionable Larcomar shop, raising issues of agency and cultural appropriation. Thus, throughout this work, Babb highlights and exemplifies the complex intersectionality that has come to define modern social science, making this a highly useful work to anyone who wishes to become more familiar with the most important issue in modern anthropology and gender studies.

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