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*Antonio de Ulloa en Huancavelica*. Por Miguel Molina Martínez. (Granada: Universidad de Granada, 1995. 263 pp. Cuadros, apéndices, notas, bibliografía. Precio no disponible.)

In 1758 Antonio de Ulloa arrived in Peru, sent to govern Huancavelica and modernize its mercury mines. A leading figure of the Spanish Enlightenment and co-author, with Jorge Juan, of the renowned *Noticias secretas*, Ulloa possessed the technical expertise to upgrade technology and increase the production of mercury, which was essential to the refining of silver in colonial Peru. By 1764, however, Ulloa had alienated many quicksilver producers and important viceregal officials and was desperate to leave the governorship.

Although the Huancavelica mines belonged to the Crown, it contracted with the guild of refiners to produce mercury. The *asiento*, or contract, established the price of quicksilver and the number of *mita* (forced) laborers the government would supply to the guild, which in turn had to sell its output to the Crown. By the mid-eighteenth century, ore quality and refiners' profits had dropped. Along with its more or less permanent population, the city harbored a festering pool of adventurers, traders, gamblers, prostitutes, *mita* workers, and free laborers. Over this tumultuous scene governors had to establish political order, police wrongdoers, improve mining operations, satisfy imperial mercury demand, and retain their physical and mental health at an altitude of 12,500 feet. Like most colonial bureaucrats, Huancavelica governors also used the office to fill their own pockets.

Ulloa stepped into that morass, confident of his expertise and prejudiced in his views of colonial society and government, which had found expression in *Noticias secretas*. Although Miguel Molina Martínez does not mention it, a meeting with the family of former governor Gaspar de la Cerda before Ulloa left Spain had confirmed his biases. Among other things, the family described the mine operators' animosity when Cerda tried to convert the guild into a company, wherein they would share equally in the profits.

Arthur P. Whitaker recounted Ulloa's travails in *The Huancavelica Mercury Mine* (1941), but Molina Martínez offers a more balanced view. For Whitaker, Ulloa symbolized progress, enlightenment, and integrity amidst Peruvian corruption; his text is a morality play in which good does not triumph. Molina Martínez gives more weight to Ulloa's shortcomings, including his lack of judicial training or political experience, his authoritarianism, and his "elevated concept of morality" (p. 50). Although Ulloa was "a true example of an enlightened scientist" (p. 31), his character made him unsuited to government, where tact and compromise were essential. Even so, Molina echoes Ulloa's own judgment regarding Huancavelica, where the mine operators constituted the greatest "monstrosities in the government of men" (p.

196). It is useful to remember, however, that Ulloa fared even worse at his succeeding appointment as governor of Louisiana, where a rebellion drove him from the colony.

Molina Martínez treats in detail Ulloa's successes and failures. He temporarily raised output, improved the city's infrastructure, and acquired a creole bride. Yet his acrimonious relations with the guild, local clergy, and viceregal authorities undermined his authority. Even his technological initiatives, such as new refining ovens, bore little enduring fruit. Because Molina Martínez's sources are chiefly Ulloa's official correspondence and especially his *relación* of government, the study inevitably favors the governor.

This book provides little context for understanding Ulloa's tenure in light of reforms carried out previously by Jerónimo de Sola and others. Nor was the guild as unanimously opposed to Ulloa as the author indicates. It would also be interesting to know more about how the guild's declining profitability affected its relationship with Ulloa. Still, this study replaces Whitaker as the essential account of Ulloa's governorship. It will reward anyone interested in the Bourbon reforms, colonial politics, or the mining industry.

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