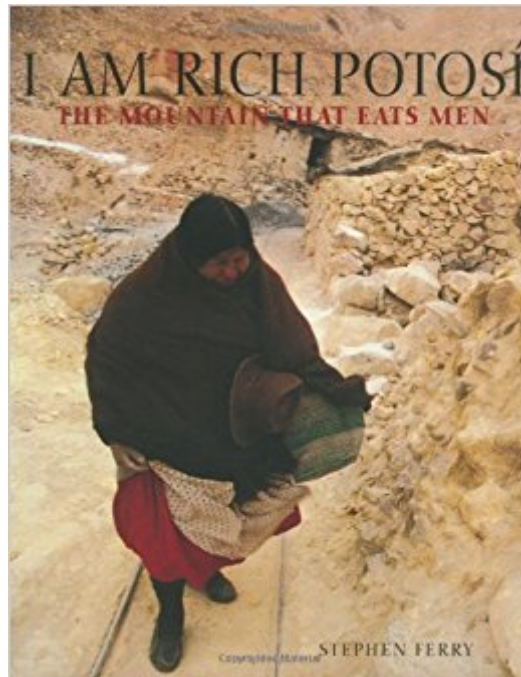


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# I Am Rich Potosi: The Mountain That Eats Men



## Synopsis

The magnificent mountain of Potosí in Bolivia yielded more silver than any other mountain or region of the world. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries this wealth flowed through Spain into Europe and played an important role in the beginnings of the Industrial Revolution and trade with Asia. Yet the grueling work of extracting the silver was left to the indigenous population of the Andes, who were enslaved by the Spanish and died by the thousands on the mountain. Today, Potosí maintains this unique culture, based on its epic history. Approximately eighteen thousand miners still work in or around the mountain, searching for trace amounts of silver and tin. Inside the mountain, miners worship their devil, who is represented as a sexually potent Spaniard, lord of the mineral realm. Photographer Stephen Ferry has made many trips to Potosí to document this ongoing drama. His color images describe this world, which echoes back to the birth of modern Europe yet is one of the poorest places in the Americas. The text by Eduardo Galeano illuminates the complexity of the intersection of ancient rituals and the grandeur of the mountain and complements Ferry's powerful portrait of this fascinating area. Ferry's photographs are divided into four sections: the miners' carnival; work that still takes place in and around the rich mountain; major institutions of civic life in the city of Potosí; and the festival of Espíritu Santo, in which miners sacrifice llamas to the devil within the mountain to appease his thirst for blood so that he will not take their lives with accidents or illness.

## Book Information

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Photojournalism

## Customer Reviews

Freelance photojournalist Ferry has made numerous trips to Potosí, the magnificent Bolivian mountain that has yielded more silver than any other mountain region of the world. In the 16th and 17th centuries, this wealth went to Spain and Europe at a tremendous cost to the indigenous population: Indians were enslaved by the Spanish and died by the thousands in the mountain. Today, approximately 18,000 miners work in the mountain, living in one of the poorest places in South America. These photos reveal their life and work. With an introductory text by the eminent Uruguayan historian Eduardo Galeano and excerpts from Ferry's own journal, *I Am Rich Potosí* illuminates the complexity of cultural intersection and the grandeur of the mountain. These beautiful, full-page photographs provide both a historical record and a passionate denunciation. Recommended for large public, academic, and specialized collections. ASylvia Andrews, Indiana State Lib., Indianapolis Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Stephen Ferry is a freelance photojournalist based in New York. He is a member of the Gamma-Liaison Agency and has spent the last ten years traveling on assignments covering social change and historic events throughout the world. Ferry studied Latin American culture and history in college, and has continued to concentrate on the region. Since 1991 he has returned yearly to Potosí. Eduardo Galeano is an eminent Uruguayan historian of Latin America. He has been extremely influential as an exponent of Latin American popular culture and history.

Would have also liked photos of the area/landscape.

Very nice pictorial treatment of a unique but little known place in this world.

Stephen Ferry is a master! I love this book

You can open to any page at random in *I Am Rich Potosí* and be struck dumb by how much life Ferry captures in the color and light of his pictures. But only by working through the whole extraordinary sequence of photographs -- as they take you through the mines, the town, the ritual life, the homes, and even the mortality of Potosí's miners - can you appreciate the intimacy with which Ferry approaches his subjects. His pictures manage to portray the depth of the miners' culture in Potosí and at the same time unsentimentally depict the grim social conditions which make Potosí "a giant monument to the conquest of the Americas." The result is a beautiful and terrifying book.

First off, I had the opportunity to sit in on 3 of Mr. Ferry's Photographic lectures on Latin America, with one of them dealing with Potosi. At first sight of these photos I thought they were good, but after he explained the particulars behind each and every picture, the book comes to life. It is now one of my favorite photographic books of all time. Eduardo Galeano fills in the historical aspect of the book and Ferry satiates the contemporary features of Potosi, Bolivia. In response to an earlier review (the only really negative review of Ferry's book) I respect the fact that you are a native born Bolivian, but if you look at Latin American History as a whole, there really isn't much that is good about it. I am sure there are small subtle lifestyles that are interesting, but people want to read and learn about historical mishaps and atrocities, such as the colonial raping of Potosi and the current poverty of the same region.

I thought Stephen Ferry's look at the miners in the context of the 500th year anniversary of the Spanish conquest was insightful. By looking at the effect the conquest had on this mountain's past and the current lives of the descendants as opposed to the usual anniversary scenes he summons a well balanced idea of cause and effect. He obviously has passion for this story and tenderness toward the conditions that yield the people towards their daily work. Although this book is a general look at the people living there, the spirit of their sensibility transcends with beautiful color and light in each photograph. The book is beautifully printed the quality is a superb 10.

Miners live in a world that almost defies description, except by the miners themselves. And the Potosi miners live in an exceptional world in itself, because the altitude of Potosi and the consequent thinning of the atmosphere at that height confer mining work, and even merely being there, with a permanent feeling of irreality in all your actions and thoughts. And that is what Stephen Ferry's images have captured in this outstanding book, the work of a real adventurer of the printed image. And Galeano's text is a fitting companion to such singular and excellent photographic work.

Beautiful photographs and intriguing commentary capture the poignant story of Potosi, an ancient and fraught silver mine in Bolivia. It is truly a mine that eats the men who work it, the beauty of the photographs is surprising considering their content and the disturbing information they display. Mr. Ferry's interaction with the miners and their community lends insight into the people who give their lives to this mine. His journal entries and the historical introduction to the pictures are a good read.

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