

Communication

To the Editor:

April 30, 1994

I am writing you to express my concern over the misrepresentation of my work in an article by José Deustua, "Routes, Roads, and Silver Trade in Cerro de Pasco, 1820–1860: The Internal Market in Nineteenth-Century Peru," in the February 1994 issue. He says on page 27:

According to Chocano's data, clearly 79 percent of the goods entering Cerro de Pasco that year came from Lima.⁸⁷ But these data are imperfect because they do not include several kinds of goods that did not pay the *alcabala*, the colonial sales tax. Such goods included food staples like potatoes, bread, corn, and wheat. A clear sign of the limitation of Chocano's sources emerges in comparing the total value of this trade (302,666 pesos) with the value of Cerro de Pasco silver production in the same year (1,523,416 pesos). The regional trade would amount to only 19.8 percent of the value of silver.

87. Chocano, "Comercio en Cerro de Pasco"; idem, "Circuitos mercantiles," . . .

In this quote he does not credit me with having realized that *alcabalas* excluded certain foodstuffs, as if I had done a whole research in *alcabala* sources without knowing this very elementary point. I clearly stated this limitation of the *alcabala* sources in the work Deustua quotes: "Comercio en Cerro de Pasco a fines de la época colonial" (B.A. thesis, Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, 1982), page 22:

El trabajo con los bienes sujetos al impuesto de alcabala despeja una parte del movimiento mercantil, pero quedan fuera de nuestro alcance productos tan importantes para una población como el pan y las harinas. Igualmente queda excluida la proporción de bienes que circulaba a través de la permuta entre empresas de uno o varios propietarios.

I repeated this idea on page 25. In my article “Circuitos mercantiles y auge minero en la sierra central a fines de la época colonial,” *Allpanchis* 18:21 (1983), pp. 3–26, which Deustua also quotes, I explain the limitations of these sources to understand peasant commercial production on page 5. His lack of scholarly precision does harm the reputation of my work as a serious piece of scholarship. He is free to disagree with my conclusions, but he is not free to give an inaccurate account of my work.

MAGDALENA G. CHOCANO MENA, Brooklyn, New York