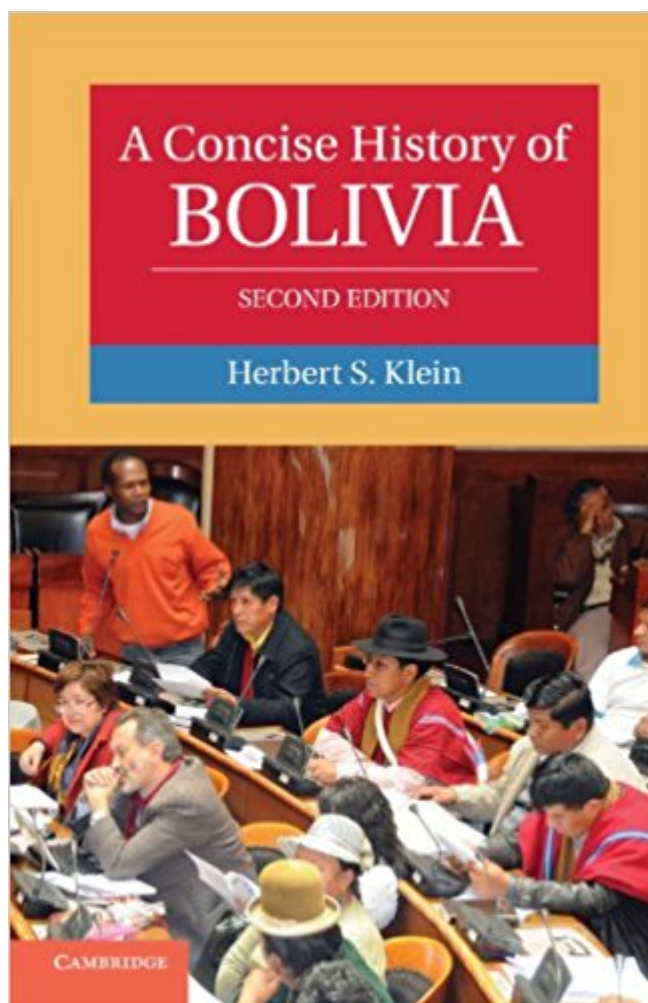


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# A Concise History Of Bolivia (Cambridge Concise Histories)



## Synopsis

Bolivia is an unusual high-altitude society created by imperial conquests and native adaptations, and it remains today the most Indian of the American republics, yet it fully participates in the world economy. It has also seen the most social and economic mobility of Indian and mestizo populations in Latin America. These are among the themes analyzed in this historical survey. In its first Spanish edition, Herbert Klein's *A Concise History of Bolivia* won immediate acceptance within Bolivia as the new standard history of this important nation. Surveying Bolivia's economic, social, cultural, and political evolution from the arrival of early man in the Andes to the present, this current version brings the history of this society up to the present day, covering the fundamental changes that have occurred since the National Revolution of 1952 and the return of democracy in 1982. These changes have included the introduction of universal education and the rise of the mestizos and Indian populations to political power for the first time in national history. Containing an updated bibliography, *A Concise History of Bolivia* remains an essential text for courses in Latin American history and politics. The second edition brings this story through the first administration of the first self-proclaimed Indian president in national history and the major changes that the government of Evo Morales has introduced in Bolivia society, politics, and economy.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This new edition brings the history of Bolivian society up to the present day, covering the fundamental changes that have occurred since the National Revolution of 1952, the return of

democracy in 1982, the installation of the first self-proclaimed Indian president in national history, and the major changes that the government of Evo Morales has introduced.

Herbert S. Klein is the author of 22 books and 163 articles in several languages on Latin America and comparative themes in social and economic history. Among these books are *The Atlantic Slave Trade*, 2nd edition (2010) and four studies of slavery, the most recent of which are *Slavery and the Economy of São Paulo, 1750-1850* (co-author, 2003), *African Slavery in Latin America and the Caribbean* (co-author, 2008) and *Slavery in Brazil* (co-author, 2009), as well as four books on Bolivian history. He has also published books on such diverse themes as *The American Finances of the Spanish Empire, 1680-1809* (1998), *A Population History of the United States* (2004) and *Hispanics in the United States Since 1980* (co-author, 2010).

Delivered as promised.

I grabbed this book as we packed our things and headed to the hospital for my baby's birth. I don't believe I would have read it otherwise. But I had nearly two days and while my wife and baby slept, I read. The writing is tedious--single sentence paragraph after single sentence paragraph. Klein often repeats his ideas and his historical summaries. It is as if he knows that the previous paragraphs lack clarity, and he circles around for another go. But the worse part is that Klein leaves out all the things that make history interesting. There are no personal stories or anecdotes. He handles famous Bolivian figures like Simon Patiño, once the wealthiest man in the world, by looking at his land holdings and his mining operations. He does not examine the man himself. He glosses over entire regimes, barely touching on known and well documented atrocities. He does not draw connections between Bolivia and the rest of South America, does not mention the influx of Jews fleeing Nazi Germany (nearly all of whom left after the war). Only a few paragraphs mention slavery (both Indian and African). There are not many books about Bolivia. And I understand why. There are more people in Manhattan than all of Bolivia. However, its history is fascinating. It is a history of grand failures. Though Klein's book did fill-out my understanding of Bolivian history, it failed to do the place justice. There is no magic in Klein's history, no personality. The tragedy of the place is lost in long circular sentences and pedestrian historical examinations. The book will be a good reference should I ever need one, but I would not recommend reading it through.

I read Herbert Klein as I traveled, through Bolivia. The first five chapters (Pre-Columbian through the

Creation of a Nation State 1841) enriched my visits to Sucre, Potosi, Oruro, and La Paz. Though the text is not intended for the average tourist, it is valuable to any traveler who has more than a passing curiosity about this unusual, provocative country. Herbert Klein is Professor of Latin American History at Columbia and his writing style reflects this. "A Concise Short History of Bolivia" reads like a college text book, jammed with dates, famous and obscure names, events and the oblique commentary. It is evident that Klein has a sharp grasp of Bolivian politics and economics, and his comments bring light to the plight and oppression that the people of Bolivia have endured. Nowhere in South America have the poor been as exploited as they have in Bolivia. The leaders of Bolivia have consistently placed the hopes for an economic renewal in Bolivia on one major export (first silver, then tin, now gas). They have not learned from history. They exploit one non-renewable resource, and spend the money (that doesn't first go into the pockets of corrupt politicians and their cronies) on bigger government buildings, a larger military (Bolivia, a landlocked nation still supports a Navy) and squander the people's future. Herbert Klein clearly shows how history documented this. Sadly, it is happening again today with the newly found reserves of LPG. After visiting Potosi and its infamous mines of 'Cerro Rico', a huge cone-shaped mountain where over 300 mines exist to extract silver, I was perplexed to find that Klein does not mention that over 8 million, million! men have suffered and died mining this mountain since 1545 when the silver was discovered. Klein glosses over this fact, choosing not to elucidate how the Spanish Crown was responsible for the genocide, yes genocide, of the indigenous population. Strikingly, Klein is silent. I sensed in reading this history text he did not want to rock any boats, and instead choose a text that would be "acceptable" for any college class (including those in Spain)... Viva the status quo! That said, the text is strongly recommended for any student of South American history, Bolivia and for those that are planning more than a few days in this wonderfully obscure country.

As a college student doing research on Bolivia, this text provided an excellent framework for my overall understanding of Bolivia's development. The book is both accurate and interesting, and provides a broad overview that includes virtually every important development in Bolivian history. There is also an excellent bibliography. Excellent resource, highly recommended

The book is really good if you're looking for a way to enter the study of Bolivian politics. Though I found that in the end, it should have stressed more the political rise of the coca leaf peasants' trade unions and party.

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