

21 BOLIVIA a) People from the Altiplano

The Altiplano, or great High Plain, of Bolivia lies between the eastern and western ranges of the Andés. Most of the Altiplano is higher than the highest mountains in the United States, yet above it tower, on either side, the main ranges of the Andes. At the northern border of Bolivia, extending into Peru, lies Lake Titicaca, about 95 miles long and 35 miles wide. This beautiful lake is at an elevation of more than 12,000 feet.

The population of Bolivia is predominantly Indian. The Indians of the highlands are the Aymaras and Quechuas, descendants of the Incas. They are farmers and shepherds primarily. They love the soil which they till, and cling to the ways of their ancestors. They seldom leave the communities in which they were born.

Although the Altiplano lies within the tropics, because of the great altitude its climate is cold in winter and cool in summer. The Indians of the region, therefore, wear heavy clothes spun and woven from the wool of the sheep and llamas which they raise. They love strong, brilliant colors, and, particularly in their shawls, use intricate designs not unlike those of their Inca ancestors. The hats worn by the women and the crocheted caps with earlaps worn by the men even under their hats are typical of the area. These hats and caps vary in minor details from village to village and often offer a means of distinguishing the village from which the wearer comes.

- 21A In the small villages in the highlands of Bolivia, a favorite gathering place is the plaza surrounded by the main government buildings and the cathedral. It is here that the natives come on holiday and fiesta occasions.
- 21B Bolivia extends from the low area, which is semitropical, to the highlands of Lake Titicaca. Here we see a woman and child of the lowlands dressed in calico standing in front of a house made of split palms.
- 21C Detail close-up of a woman and her child. Notice the shadow of the thatch roof on the back wall and the quality of the wood used in the construction of the house.

- 21D In the cooler climates, it is not uncommon to find the men wearing vests of sheepskin or other animal hide.
- 21E Occasionally, as added protection against the cold, the women who work in the fields will fasten (peasant fashion) a burlap bag over their heads.
- 21F In the highlands where the air is moist and cold, it is customary for men and boys to wear caps with earlaps. The caps are rarely removed and are often worn under hats.
- 21G Even in the highlands of Lake Titicaca, children must go to school and here we see one of the little girls with her school-books on her way.
- 21H Corn is one of the crops raised in the Cochabamba area. Here against the rich textured background of the corn stalks, is an Indian woman wearing her exquisitely woven shawl.
- 21I Groups of Indian picking and sorting the corn.
- 21J The Bolivian woman is a very busy person and even on her way to market or coming through the fields she will use the time spinning the wool which is so essential for weaving the garments they wear.