

BOOK REVIEWS

GENERAL

Historia social latinoamericana (nuevos enfoques). By MAGNUS MÖRNER. Caracas: Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, 1979. Charts. Bibliography. Indexes. Pp. 376. Paper.

Estratificación social hispanoamericana durante el período colonial. By MAGNUS MÖRNER. Research Paper Series, No. 28. Stockholm: Institute of Latin American Studies, 1980. Tables. Figures. Notes. Bibliography. Pp. 128. Paper.

For nearly three decades Magnus Mörner has been one of the most versatile and productive members of the international community of Latin American historians. Many of his works treat Spanish America in its entirety, and some include the Portuguese sphere as well. He has done primary research on several different countries. He ranges over the entire colonial period and increasingly beyond it into the nineteenth and even twentieth centuries. He has done institutional studies, socioeconomic ones, and combinations of the two. Perhaps more than anyone else in the field, he integrates into his writings the most recent relevant works not only from all over the Spanish-, Portuguese-, and English-speaking worlds, but from the European continent down to its remotest corners, including the Netherlands and Eastern Europe. His bibliographies are marvelous contributions, invariably containing several valuable items of which no one else seems to have taken notice.

Mörner has not neglected large-scale intensive research into regional realities, starting with his study of the Paraguayan Jesuits and continuing to his present long-term investigations of the rural history of the Cuzco region. But his specialty, the truly Mörnerian genre, is to work up a careful, even-handed synthesis of some well-defined theme in a broad temporal and spatial framework, drawing on accounts by contemporaries, published documents, his own researches, and, above all, whatever scattered relevant scholarship may exist. Sometimes such undertakings make books, as did his *Race Mixture in the History of Latin America* (1967), but more often they become large pieces in congress proceedings or

journals. The corpus has long cried out for collection and unification, and since it is in good part historiographical, it can also profit from updating.

Historia social latinoamericana goes quite far toward filling both needs. It gives a generous sampling of essays and research articles, several of them published before, some substantially revised, and some new. The chapters are arranged into three sections by theme: immigration, haciendas and hacienda labor, and Africans in Latin America. In an attempt to bridge the often artificial gap between colonial and national periods, Mörner includes pieces in each section that carry the theme into the nineteenth century or farther. In fact, despite the continuity at the level of actual phenomena, the difference in sources and scholarly traditions is so strong that with the best of will the author finds it hard to bring the later period into proper alignment with the earlier. Yet in one chapter, on a Peruvian coca-growing area from the late colonial period into the nineteenth century, Mörner does manage, by operating at the level of exactly comparable local primary records, to make an effortless, hardly noticeable transition, reminiscent of the feat of David Brading in his study of estates in León, Guanajuato.

Mörner is also concerned to put Latin American topics in a wider framework, as he is well equipped to do; one interesting article compares Latin American tenant laborers and sharecroppers with their approximate counterparts as far away as Scandinavia and Poland. In this kind of analysis, one is often left so much at the mercy of scholarship that cannot be judged directly and categories possibly ill-suited to the material that only time can tell if anything has been accomplished, but the undertaking is surely worth the effort.

The book's introduction is devoted to surveying the evolving methods of the literature on the humble and the anonymous in Latin American history. It is a good, wide-ranging Mörnerian rundown, although I find that it unduly neglects the method that has proved most productive of all in throwing light on the patterns of everyday life in early Latin America: the close, fleshed-out investigation of individual careers and small entities, as practiced by Bowser, Brading, Góngora, and many others. This seems ironic in a book subtitled *nuevos enfoques*, at a time when the French *Annales* school with LeRoy Ladurie has so recently (and to my mind belatedly) begun to switch its emphasis in just that direction.

Estratificación social hispanoamericana durante el período colonial is a nearly book-sized essay published as a research paper and intended ultimately for inclusion in a collaborative general history. Since it examines stratification under the headings of law, status and ethnicity, occupations, property and income, power, education, and kinship, as well as giving much attention to variation across time and space, it is much

broader than its title implies. It is in fact tantamount to a survey of the general organization and evolution of colonial Spanish American society, and it is the most comprehensive and up-to-date such treatment available. This time Mörner has outdone himself in mining recent doctoral dissertations and using many items that bear the same publication date as the paper itself. There are numerous useful tables and figures, some of them newly compiled or adapted, others taken directly from other publications.

As a whole, the paper is impressive, done with a unity and balance considerably surpassing that of the more ambitiously titled *Historia social latinoamericana*. Yet it strikes me that there is some tension, on the one hand, between the general plan and conceptual equipment, and, on the other, the wealth of new content. The overall framework is much like that of the author's previously mentioned *Race Mixture*; in both publications the legal aspects receive first mention, something surely more appropriate before the social history revolution than after it. Mörner incorporates the results of some of the recent research showing how long it took for any clear dichotomy to arise between locally born and peninsular-born Spaniards, and how different the relationships were between the two, at all points, than once was imagined. Yet he continues to use the categories "peninsular" and "creole" without any discussion of them at all, not only for the late colonial period, when the terms or their equivalents were finally coming to have something like the meanings we of today have tended to give them, but for the earlier centuries, when such a thing was no part of the general mental or linguistic baggage. I do not mean to say that Mörner has made no conceptual adjustment at all; together with many of us, he has quite given up on the notion of the "debt peon" (though in truth, he was already leaning in that direction as long ago as *Race Mixture*).

The profusion of information included makes Mörner acutely aware of temporal and geographical variation. This I find laudable, but too often the resulting impression is one of chaos. I miss a serious attempt to find the pattern and predictability in the variation. Mörner does not seem to see, for example, that in wealthy and central areas society was more tightly organized and better defined; in poor and peripheral regions, looser, more diffuse, and often archaic in being like central regions had been at earlier times. At least, in the paper such ideas do not play the role they easily could in rendering variety intelligible. However that may be, every serious student of early Latin American society can profit from *Estratificación social hispanoamericana*.

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