

cialize in the provincial architecture of this region, while recognizing that it is, in his own words, “completely overshadowed by the mainstream in colonial Mexico” (p. 75).

This text would be best described as a reference work. If there is ever a need to restore or even reconstruct one of the structures the author has chosen to include in this book, this is certainly the appropriate volume to which to turn. For example, the brick town fountain at Chiapa de Corzo is described, diagrammed, and photographed from eight different angles, and is also measured in infinite detail, including more than fifty-two integers that apply to the dimensions of this structure alone. The entire text is a very expansive treatment of a minor topic, and would be of most interest to specialists in that temporal and geographic area.

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A Tropical Plains Frontier: The Llanos of Colombia, 1531–1831. By JANE M. RAUSCH. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984. Maps. Tables. Notes. Illustrations. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xv, 317. Cloth. \$29.95.

As Alistair Hennessy observes in *The Frontier in Latin American History*, the frontier experience in Latin America seems to reverse the principal themes identified by Turner in his seminal interpretation of the western frontier’s significance for the United States. Unlike the American frontier, with its connotations of freedom and mobility perennially revitalizing the spirit of enterprise and democracy, Latin America’s frontiers seem to have perpetuated archaic forms of economic exploitation and social organization, reflecting and sustaining—rather than transforming—many of the worst features of the dominant cultures from which they derived.

Rausch’s study of the Colombian Llanos both reinforces this sharp contrast and, by concentrating on a specific area, enriches our understanding of similarities and differences within the range of frontier experiences in Latin America. Organized as a chronological account of the region’s history from the conquest to the early republican period, the book describes the course of its development and delineates the major patterns of its social and economic organization. A succinct survey of largely secondary sources shows that, like other Iberian colonial frontiers, the Llanos were sparsely populated by semisedentary and foraging Amerindian communities which offered a narrow base for European settlement. Attracted by illusions of El Dorado, Spanish settlers established only precarious outposts on the region’s eastern fringes, which, distant from the centers of colonial society, were for long organized around those primordial institutions of Spanish domination, the *encomienda* and the mission. From a brief but illuminating outline of missionary activity, which emphasizes its fundamental importance in creating and stabilizing the frontier, Rausch proceeds to a more detailed analysis of the Llanero

society that had emerged by the late colonial period. Drawing on archival sources, she focuses on the Comunero rebellion in the Llanos to show how revolt arose, not from imperfectly hispanicized Indians, but from whites and hispanicized Indians who, through closer integration into the colonial economy and more exposure to the pressures of church and state, had developed distinctive economic grievances. Second, she demonstrates that, despite the expulsion of the Jesuits and the crown's increasing preference for soldiers rather than missionaries, the missions continued to play a central role in the region. Indeed, the very paucity of the military presence helps to account for the disproportionate importance of the Llanos during the wars of independence. As a concluding comparison of the Venezuelan and Colombian Llanos reveals, however, the realities of isolation quickly reasserted themselves after the war, and the Colombian Llanos reverted to the margins of national life, marooned in a state of neglect more akin to the eastern borderlands of Peru, Ecuador, and Bolivia than to conditions in the physically more similar but economically dynamic grassland regions of Venezuela and Argentina.

As a consistently interesting and lucid account of the Colombian Llanos in a formative period, this book makes a valuable contribution to Colombia's historiography and complements the regional studies of Ann Twinam on Antioquia, William Sharp on the Chocó, and Germán Colmenares on the Cauca Valley. Moreover, as a study of a Spanish American frontier region, it will also be of interest to all those concerned to understand the varieties and disparities of European interpenetration and interaction with native American cultures on the frontiers of Iberian society in the New World.

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ANTHONY MCFARLANE

Miners of the Red Mountain: Indian Labor in Potosí, 1545–1650. By PETER BAKEWELL. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1985. Illustrations. Notes. Figures. Map. Appendixes. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xvi, 213. Cloth. \$19.95.

For four hundred years, "Potosí" has been synonymous with unimagined riches and the quintessential symbol of exploitation. From Luis Capoché's condemnation of the mine as the "harsh executioner" of Indians through Theodor de Bry's lugubrious propaganda to modern work, opinion has agreed that here, in the *cerro rico*, the most naked forms of colonial oppression could be found. Indeed, one would have to go back to the ancient world, or perhaps beyond to Egypt, to find a parallel to the Spanish success in turning a peaceful rural people to non-agricultural ends on such a massive and brutal scale. As Peter Bakewell says, the Black Legend hangs heavily around the town's history. Just why recent judgment on Potosí as well as opinion on other kinds of oppression and exploitation now