

the author is meticulous in her treatment of the sources, and is balanced and moderate in her judgments. She raises significant questions about a subject that deserves further attention, and provides a useful framework for future historical inquiry.

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*Bondmen and Rebels: A Study of Master-Slave Relations in Antigua; with Implications for Colonial British America.* By DAVID BARRY GASPAR. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985. Maps. Tables. Notes. Index. Pp. xvii, 338. Cloth. \$35.00

Apart from the murder of its governor in 1711 by rioting colonists, the history of Antigua is perhaps best known for a widespread slave conspiracy that was discovered on the island in 1736. It is of particular interest, because it provides one of the first instances in the British Caribbean of African creole slaves joining together in revolt, and an early example, too, of black rebels aiming to destroy a slave system rather than just escape from it. Gaspar uses the event as a window on the evolution of slavery in the British Leeward Isles during the century before 1760. His book is divided into three parts. The first meticulously unravels the 1736 plot, proceeding step-by-step through trial records of notable thoroughness. Part 2 is an examination of slave society in Antigua. Separate discussions are devoted to African recruitment, plantation life, and social control. The third section explores patterns of slave resistance. It shows how the incidence and nature of running away, rebellion, and intracommunal crime varied through time, and it tries to relate such variation to a wide range of causal factors. The author consistently avoids easy explanations, and displays sensitivity and resourcefulness in extracting meaning from evidence of very uneven value. The book's relevance is broadened by frequent and extensive references to studies of slavery elsewhere (though principally in British America). It is an important contribution to the literature on slave resistance and to our knowledge of one of the least studied periods in British West Indian history.

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*Los comuneros: Guerra social y lucha anticolonial.* By MARIO AGUILERA PEÑA. Bogotá: Universidad Nacional de Colombia, 1985. Graphs. Maps. Tables. Notes. Appendixes. References. Pp. 277. Paper.

In his book *The People and the King*, the late John Phelan rejected existing interpretations of the 1781 Comunero rebellion as either a precursor of independence or a frustrated social revolution. By focusing on the ideology of the creole

leadership, he argued that the rebellion was fundamentally conservative in its aims and outlook and that, rather than seeking to overturn the system of colonial government, it simply sought to preserve the status quo against Bourbon innovation. The debate over the *Comuneros* is, however, far from over, and in this new book Mario Aguilera Peña seeks to incorporate some of Phelan's findings, while renewing the effort to explore the social dimensions and significance of the insurrection, and to provide a "radical" interpretation.

The author's aims are clearly and unequivocally stated. First, he seeks to show that the rebellion was deeply rooted in a social crisis arising from the struggle for land. Next, he calls for a clearer analysis of the social forces involved, and of the ways in which social and regional divisions within the movement shaped its aims and development. Finally, he argues for a more dynamic analysis of the rebellion, offering a new periodization of its development in order to give weight to its popular and radical character.

In pursuit of these goals, the book is only partly successful. It is at its best when analyzing the leadership of the rebellion, the mobilization of rebel forces, and the organization of the rebel army. Here, it provides a good account of the heterogeneous social and regional groups involved and, by such specificity, clarifies the diverse nature of the social alliance on which the rebellion was built. Linked to a more detailed periodization of the rebellion, this highlights the internal variety of its composition and aims, and the internal tensions and frictions to which it was subjected.

The book is, however, much weaker when dealing with other central themes. First, its discussion of the "agrarian question" in the Santander region, the epicenter of the revolt—a theme essential to the argument of the book as a whole—is interesting, but unconvincing. Clearly, there were demographic pressures on the land, leading, as the book shows, to movements of colonization both within the region and on its margins. But there is no evidence of "olas migratorias españolas que en el siglo XVIII llegaron al Nuevo Reino" (p. 26), nor is it clear from the fragmentary evidence presented that land ownership was becoming significantly more concentrated, that rents were generally rising, food prices increasing, and real wages falling. That there were social divisions and antagonisms is undeniable; that economic change generated social crisis remains unproven.

Another problem is that, while the book purports to reveal a popular urge to overthrow the colonial state and to transform the social order, it fails to provide any convincing evidence of such revolutionary intent. The riots and rebellions of Indians, slaves, and free people all reflect a tradition of popular action in eighteenth-century New Granada of which the author seems unaware. The cultural content of this tradition—reflected in some of the book's material on the behavior and beliefs of plebeian rebels—is largely ignored. Rather than investigating popular attitudes, Aguilera Peña chooses a tendentious economic reductionism—in which terms such as "clase dominante" and "masas oprimidas"

are given little specific content—coupled with an equally tendentious and speculative attempt to demonstrate that the plebeian rebel leader Galán was a social revolutionary.

Finally, the book ends uneasily, with a closing chapter that consists almost entirely of transcribed documents. Although they are supposed to throw new light on the connections between the Comunero rebellion and the movement toward independence, these documents are open to conflicting interpretations and, in the absence of any analysis from Aguilera Peña, do not sustain his argument that a group within the Neogranadine elite continued to nourish the idea of independence from Spain. As elsewhere in the book, the author raises interesting questions but fails to answer them fully; the Comunero rebellion still awaits its definitive history.

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#### NATIONAL PERIOD

*Historia política de los campesinos latinoamericanos*. 4 vols. Coordinated by PABLO GONZÁLEZ CASANOVA. Mexico City: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1984–85. Tables. Notes. Bibliographies. Pp. 247, 220, 253, 246. Paper.

Este libro es presentado como la primera historia política de los campesinos latinoamericanos y como una historia de la conciencia campesina opuesta a las “falsas opciones” intelectuales. La obvia intención es demostrar que el campesinado latinoamericano es capaz de constituirse en una clase política orientada conscientemente a la transformación revolucionaria de la sociedad. Sin embargo, casi mil páginas de texto no logran acercarse a este ambicioso objetivo: el libro está compuesto, en realidad, de 21 ensayos (uno para cada nación), escritos por diferentes autores desde las más variadas perspectivas, abarcando períodos históricos disímiles y usando nociones de campesinado contradictorias. No todos los ensayos comparten el campesinismo ingenuo y retórico con que son presentados. Varios capítulos son meros balances militantes de la coyuntura política rural, que evaden toda perspectiva histórica. Hay también capítulos que son interesantes análisis estructurales de orientación sociológica. Mientras unos autores definen al campesinado en su sentido general de habitantes del campo, muchos otros excluyen explícitamente a los trabajadores rurales asalariados. Prácticamente ningún autor aborda el estudio de la conciencia campesina. Muy pocos ensayos intentan presentar una *historia política* del campesinado: es sintomático, por ejemplo, que un ensayo destinado a probar la inexistencia histórica del campesinado en Argen-