

tive compilation. It is the best single reference on Texas colonial history from the perspective of European explorers, missionaries, and policymakers.

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Gazeta de México (enero a julio de 1785). Windsor, Ontario: Rolston-Bain, 1986. Tables. Cloth. \$38.50.

What student of eighteenth-century Mexico is not aware of its flourishing periodical press? Although the best-known journals are perhaps those of José Antonio de Alzate, they are not alone. The *Gazeta de México* (1784–1821), published by don Manuel Antonio Valdés, a professional printer who was educated at the Colegio de San Ildefonso, is another important source on this epoch. Indeed, because of its official character—approved by the viceroy, containing announcements of bureaucratic appointments, and subject to censorship—the *Gazeta* casts light on the relationship between the educated public and the state that is not found elsewhere.

The volume under review is the *Gazeta*'s third, January to July 1785. It has been handsomely reprinted by Rolston-Bain as part of its Colección Documenta Novae Hispaniae series. Now that electronic publishing threatens to make printed books an endangered species, the appearance and feel (and even smell) of a facsimile edition are themselves of value. If the instructor should bring the volume to class, students would benefit from a chance to look at the script and layout of a period newspaper. But this book has more to recommend it.

Reading the original *Gazeta* makes immediate the eclectic, utilitarian outlook of the educated person of the eighteenth century. We all know in the abstract of that reader's nearly unslakeable thirst for useful knowledge. As we work our way through the lists of New Spain's exports; gunpowder production; ascents and precipitous descents of hot-air balloons; cures for *matlazahuatl* (a possible form of typhus), pneumonia, and hysteria (this by Mesmer's use of magnets); a new method of refining silver; and a machine to spin cloth, we are drawn into the preoccupations of the time to the point where we wait with some interest for the next installment of "How to fumigate scorpions." Any resident of a cockroach-affected region can feel a kinship with the bedeviled residents of Durango and Querétaro on that score.

The *Gazeta* also allows a fresh look at the controversy over the degree to which the Bourbon period brought change. Some scholars see a sharp divide between traditional, Hapsburg public discourse and the reformist Bourbon version. They stress the state's efforts to create a work-oriented populace with abstemious habits and obedience to direction by the upper classes and the government. The voice of enlightened despotism speaks clearly in the very first article of the January 4, 1784, issue. It describes Viceroy Mayorga's famous division of Mexico City into 32 districts under the authority of a new police force and concludes that this will

“promote industry and the arts, . . . exile laziness, drunkenness, and games. . . .” But sometimes the voice hesitates, and we glimpse confusion among the *Gazeta*’s contributors as to the new party line.

Take the happy report on the construction of a ballcourt in Zacatecas. A winner’s purse of two thousand pesos has been pledged to attract players from both Americas. “Persons” have objected, however, so the *Gazeta* dutifully insists that “all proceeds from the games will go to a pious work.” Another instance: we know historically that figures of monsters were banished from the late eighteenth-century Corpus Christi procession. But here they reappear in scientific guise in the reports of the woman from Parras with four breasts and the duck with four feet or the calf with six. (We might note that women and animals are often the subjects.)

Of course, such news sells newspapers, but it also reflects the educated public’s continuous fascination with marvels. The *Gazeta* thereby provides some evidence to support those scholars who believe the shift in late colonial attitudes was a gradual, uneven process, with literate reformers as well as *gente plebea* reluctant to abandon their old diversions and love of the bizarre.

The changing role of the church is nicely profiled here. Notices of elaborate religious processions and the burials of ecclesiastical dignitaries abound, but we also learn that nothing is necessarily sacred. Under the Convent of the Missionaries Propaganda Fide in Pachuca lies a rich deposit of silver; an enterprising miner has the coffins dug up to reach it. The prior of the Convent of Santo Domingo in Oaxaca is eager to join the investigation of a fire in the royal gunpowder factory; citing a German chemist, he declares that the particles of urea stirred by a breeze and trod on by the workers may have combined with the sand on the ground and the carbon of the mill to start the blaze. “May this knowledge benefit humanity and favor the royal interest”—two goals that, in his view at least, go hand in hand.

Finally, the *Gazeta* depicts this era’s zest for debate. Avoidance of politics did not mean avoidance of disagreements. Contributors are complimented or sniped at, as the evidence may require. With notices from provincial towns, some quite isolated, the impression is suggestively incongruous—a small-town meeting of enlightened souls in the hemisphere’s largest city of the unemployed.

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The Economy and Material Culture of Slaves: Goods and Chattels on the Sugar Plantations of Jamaica and Louisiana. By RODERICK A. MCDONALD. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1993. Maps. Figures. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xiv, 339 pp. Cloth. \$39.95.

This book develops three recent, growing, and related themes in the study of slavery in the Americas. The first is the significance of the “internal economy”