

geographic origins of the regidores (that is, the proportion of creoles and peninsulars); the economic activities of cabildo members (who were encomenderos, landowners, merchants, or a combination of these); the social “configuration” of the political elite; and the relations between the cabildos and the governors, the church, and the crown. Ana Martínez Ortega devotes as much space as possible to Campeche and Valladolid, so that the book lives up to its claim of being a study of all three cabildos. Moreover, the book analyzes the entire century, so that no one era is overemphasized at the expense of the others. Martínez Ortega thus succeeds in presenting a balanced study of three different city councils over a relatively long period.

A serious defect of the book, however, is the author’s frequent self-contradiction regarding the basic thesis being presented. She argues over and over again that the elite of Yucatán was a closed group (pp. 114, 115, 176, 189). Yet all her evidence proves the contrary, as she herself just as frequently admits (pp. 103–4, 114, 175, 178). Similarly, Martínez Ortega argues that Yucatán had a “natural” economy, that the province was “commercially isolated” and completely lacking in resources, that virtually no economic development took place, and that Yucatán’s “socioeconomic structure did not change throughout its entire life as a colony” (p. 179). But she also mentions the eighteenth-century phenomena of demographic growth, transformation of the landed estate, and Campeche’s commercial vitality, thereby contradicting the other interpretation. The book, in short, lacks a consistent, coherent argument, and will more than likely confuse rather than inform the reader.

Also problematic is the author’s attempt to distinguish between descendants of “conquistadors” and of “recent immigrants” in order to demonstrate that the latter came to dominate the cabildo in the eighteenth century. Regidores are judged to be of “recent” origin if any of their ancestors was a later immigrant, even if the great majority were not. Moreover, the category “recent” includes people whose immigrant ancestors arrived more than a century earlier. Since most of the late colonial upper class was descended (through females as well as males) from both the sixteenth-century elite and the later arrivals, the distinction is spurious.

The book therefore is informative, and it provides useful data for comparison with other regions. But the interpretations should be used with caution.

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*Providence Island, 1630–1641: The Other Puritan Colony.* By KAREN ORDAHL KUPPERMAN. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993. Maps. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliographical essay. Index. xiii, 393 pp. Cloth. \$59.95.

Karen Ordahl Kupperman, an accomplished historian of the earliest British colonization ventures, having previously published a fine study of the failed settlement

of Roanoke Island, here turns her attention to the long-neglected Puritan colonization of Providence Island, which took place simultaneously with the establishment of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. She seeks both to offer a comprehensive history of this endeavor and to compare its character to that of New England to ascertain if certain "puritan" aspects of colonization prevailed or if, instead, the greatly different settings of the two ventures caused them to be quite distinct. Kupperman achieves both her goals, and through her laudable comparative approach identifies three qualities found in successful British colonization efforts in the Americas: private ownership of land, local control of taxation, and civilian control of the military.

None of these attributes was present on Providence Island, and Kupperman argues that ultimately their absence doomed the venture. Given Spain's resolute resistance, however, the colony perhaps could never have long prevailed. Located only about a hundred miles off the Nicaraguan coast, this predatory British settlement intended to enrich itself and aggrieve the Spanish through privateering. Spain made three concerted efforts to eradicate the colony, all between 1535 and 1541; the third succeeded easily, and the settlers were permitted to return to England. This humane treatment of the defeated stands in contrast to the British colonists' decision several years earlier to massacre Spanish prisoners taken in a failed campaign, even though the captured had been promised quarter.

With its focus on developing export crops and raiding Spanish commerce, and with close political control retained by company directors back in the home country, Providence Island far more closely resembled Britain's southern and other Caribbean colonies than other puritan colonies. Unfortunately, the limitations of the surviving documentation prevent Kupperman from exploring the colony's social history in any depth. She says little about family or community life. A substantial chapter on labor systems does discuss aspects of indentured servitude and the colony's rapid, large-scale shift to black slave labor, a transformation that was quick even in comparison to England's other Caribbean colony of the time, Barbados. Providence Island also experienced the controversies over religious issues that plagued its New England counterparts, but unlike those communities, it attracted largely deficient and controversial ministers who rarely lasted long.

Kupperman has surveyed all documentation of any significance on this colonial undertaking and has composed a comprehensive and thoughtful consideration of the enterprise. She distinguishes her book with telling comparisons to developments in other British American colonies. Given the author's interests and the sources utilized, it is understandable that she does not address Spain's perspective on and response to the placement of this hostile colony in the midst of its colonial commercial lifeline.

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