

Colonial Period

The Political Economy of Spanish America in the Age of Revolution, 1750–1850.

Edited by KENNETH J. ANDRIEN and LYMAN L. JOHNSON. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994. Tables. Notes. Index. viii, 263 pp. Cloth, \$27.50.

This volume collects fascinating and specialized empirical studies on the role of the late colonial and early independence-era state in Spanish America. Research on the persistence of colonial political culture, business practices, regulatory policies, public enterprise, and international commercial policy is framed by the editors' overall focus on the enduring importance and influence of late Bourbon colonial initiatives. At the same time that the editors emphasize continuities, they also explore significant regional and national differences in political economy, socioeconomic development, and nation-state building in Spanish America.

In many ways this volume is both a summary of the state of historical research on the 1750–1850 period and a call for more systematic comparative investigations. The individual articles, by some of the most well-known and careful scholars in the field, vary greatly in topic, level and scope of research, and extent of comparative thrust. A short review cannot do justice to the erudition of most of the essays; their quality is almost uniformly high and each represents a particular contribution to the literature on Bourbon and early republican political economy. The first six essays focus on Mexico, with some references to Peru: state formation and the Iturbide monarchy in Mexico (Anna); the Bourbon and republican state's influence on socioeconomic change in Oaxaca (Hamnett); the Mexican tobacco monopoly as a mirror of state-building issues, public enterprise, and labor policy (Deans-Smith); Mexican commercial and tariff policy (Salvucci, Salvucci, and Cohen); merchants and the state in Mexico (Kicza); and Bourbon mining policy and the mercury trade, especially in Mexico and Peru (Brown). For non-Mexicanists, Andrien, Johnson, and Cooney and Whigham provide relief in the next three chapters: the state and dependency in Ecuador; the issue of social justice in a changing economy in Buenos Aires province; and Paraguayan commerce from 1770 to 1850.

All the contributors remain loyal to the editors' overall framework of policy continuities and discontinuities from the 1750s to the 1850s. At times, however, the reader may sense that the diversity and specialized nature of the historical research is reminiscent of a special issue of a professional journal rather than an edited book volume. What saves the volume is the editors' excellent introduction and conclusions, which telescope and summarize the major historical, methodological, and theoretical issues; the current state of historical research on the 1750–1850 period; and the agenda for further research. Andrien and Johnson clearly state and admirably support the main theses: the late colonial state usually determined the context for economic development, allocating labor, land, access to mineral resources, and regulating most productive and commercial activity. This legacy of economic interventionism endured in the postcolonial period,

and though it conflicted with imported liberal economic doctrine and experiments, it survived past midcentury, albeit with significant variation from nation to nation and from region to region within nations. Such state intervention “proved costly” both in the colonial period and after independence, imposing heavy tax burdens, a cumbersome bureaucracy, institutionalized inefficiencies, and pervasive corruption (pp. 249–50).

With independence the colonial state collapsed; and its republican replacement lacked legitimacy, administrative capabilities, and financial capacity. Resulting changes in policy both benefited some sectors of Spanish American society and disadvantaged those who had been “protected” by the colonial scheme. Nevertheless, the region’s new political leaders often attempted “to maintain essential elements of the colonial state’s economic role” (p. 252), though this varied in regard to productive versus regulatory activities and from one nation to another.

This emphasis on the survival of colonial political culture and the premises of political economy is not new in the historical literature, nor for that matter in the literature of economic historians who have studied Spanish America. Indeed this argument constituted the central thesis of perhaps the most important textbook written on the Latin American economies (Glade, *The Latin American Economies*, New York, 1969). The call for systematic and empirical research on this topic, and illustrations of some of the directions such research might take is an important contribution made by Andrien and Johnson. So is the clear demonstration that historians must consider continuity *and* change, that comparative research and theory is essential, and that theory is no substitute for old-fashioned and new-fashioned hard-core empirical research.

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Brutality and Benevolence: Human Ethology, Culture, and the Birth of Mexico.

By ABEL A. ALVES. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996. Bibliographic essay. Index. ix, 247 pp. Cloth, \$59.95.

This book has two interwoven but distinct components. The first is a standard description of the Spanish conquest and early colonization of Mexico. Readers seeking new information from untapped archives will be disappointed, for the author relies almost exclusively on a handful of familiar secondary works and the usual repertoire of published primary sources, chiefly sixteenth-century chronicles and documentary collections (e.g., Paso y Troncoso’s *Papeles de la Nueva España*). Major recent historiographical contributions receive relatively little attention; for example, Woodrow Borah’s monumental work on the General Indian Court is cited only once, in a chapter entitled “The Pursuit of Justice.”

The book’s second component is a theoretical framework based on sociobiological studies of primate behavior. All humans share over 98 percent of their DNA code with chimpanzees, and on this premise Alves bases his “attempt to seek out the animal universals underlying the nuances of human culture and custom” (p. 11). Like their pri-