

*La rebelión de los indios y la paz de los españoles.* By FELIPE CASTRO.

Mexico City: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1996. Photographs. Plates. Map. Notes. Glossary. Bibliography. 170 pp. Paper.

*Vivir en frontera: la experiencia de los indios de Chiapas.* By JAN DE VOS.

Mexico: Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social, 1994. Photographs. Maps. Tables. Notes. Glossary. Bibliography. 313 pp. Paper.

Scholars interested in colonial history and indigenous resistance will benefit from reading these two recent and innovative studies published by the Centro de Investigaciones y Estudios Superiores en Antropología Social (CIESAS) as part of the series *Historia de los pueblos indígenas de México*. Both works provide thought-provoking examinations of the historically specific and multiple ways that indigenes participated in the social and cultural transformations of the colonial period, and De Vos also makes a sustained effort to explore colonial legacies in the neocolonial context of Chiapas from 1910 through 1940. While making explicit the inadequacies of interpretations that too easily equate the past with the present, the authors demonstrate a deep history of ethnic oppression and resistance in Mexico. With varying degrees of success, they also indicate the more nuanced and even contradictory ways that power, identity, and historical knowledge have been constructed, mediated, and redefined at the local and national levels.

Both books, and the series they are part of, stress that there is no such thing as a single Indian history. They are committed to recognizing the complexities, divergent trajectories, and creativity of the indigenous past and present. In *La rebelión de los indios y la paz de los españoles*, Felipe Castro provides a comparative overview of indigenous rebellions across the geographic expanse of New Spain. The book is organized along thematic lines—chapters are entitled “causes,” “modes of resistance,” “preparing rebellion,” “leaders of rebellion,” “repression,” “indigenous rebellion,” and “the evolution of society in New Spain”—and illustrated with examples drawn from 1531 through 1801. It works well as a basic introduction, although—perhaps inevitably, given its sweeping conceptualization—the studies are brief and at times lack depth.

Given the transitory nature of historical memory, we should not underestimate the need to state the obvious. Thus, Castro’s assertion that “in general rebellions occurred because the indigenous population lived in a situation of oppression, exploitation, discrimination, and cultural aggression” (p. 33) is welcome. His focus on armed insurrection—despite his recognition that this is but one form of resistance, and not necessarily the most prevalent one throughout the colonial period—is a salient reminder of past and frequently tragic experience. The most innovative aspects of this study are the least developed. More sustained discussion of everyday life, mestizaje, religious change and redefinition, politics, and semiautonomous spaces such as urban mining centers would provide us with a better understanding of the relatively rare, though undeniably important, uprisings that caught the attention of colonial authorities and entered into the historical record in substantial detail.

In *Vivir en frontera: la experiencia de los indios de Chiapas*, Jan De Vos provides a

superb, regionally focused study of indigenous life over several centuries in Chiapas. De Vos is well aware of the influence of social power at all levels of historical interpretation. He acknowledges the limitations of his own situation as a foreign scholar, and empathizes with contemporary indigenous demands for self-description. His book skillfully combines extensive engagement with existing historical sources and a recognition of their inadequacies and limitations. It is divided into three main parts, including the conquest (1524–44); the colonial era (1545–1821); and the century from independence through the revolution (1821–1911); De Vos then extends his discussion of this latter period through the land reforms of the Cárdenas era (1934–1940).

In addition to De Vos's perceptive discussion of the issues challenging historians conducting research in Chiapas—documents that are “the vision of the victors,” archives that have been burned, extensive oral history traditions—each part of the book makes important contributions. De Vos recognizes that resistance takes varied forms and can combine heroic with avaricious moments. He carefully documents specific ways that indigenes were victimized under colonialism, while also conclusively demonstrating their inventive capacity to respond, at times in ways that preserved substantial autonomy. His portrayal of the region's microcomplexity along ethnic lines, including the growth of “nahuát [sic] chiapaneco” (p. 83) due to colonial-era transfers of indigenous populations from the central valley into Chiapas, is quite fascinating. De Vos also comments perceptively on indigenous politics in colonial and neocolonial contexts, on ethnic hierarchy and the emergence of racism in Chiapas, and on the development of debt peonage in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Readers interested in more recent events will find relevant his discussion of Cárdenas-era land reforms, his criticisms of caciquismo, and his call for pluralism within both indigenous communities and the Mexican national space.

Both of these works are sophisticated enough for the specialist, though intended for the general public. They contain extensive documentary appendixes, and are attractively packaged and illustrated. The scholarship is current and provocative, and the books highly recommended.

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*Crecimiento económico y transformaciones sociales: esclavos, hacendados y comerciantes en la Cuba colonial (1760–1840)*. By PABLO TORNERO TINAJERO. Madrid: Ministerio de Trabajo y Seguridad Social, 1996. Figures. Appendixes. 390 pp. Paper.

Pablo Tornero has written this study of colonial Cuba to help explain the historical causes of Cuba's underdevelopment. He has selected the period from 1760 to 1840, because for him this era marks the origin of the island's dependency, its monoculture, and thus its underdevelopment. The Cuban sugar plantation system, which Tornero claims came to fruition in the mid-nineteenth century, persisted until 1959. Based on thorough research in Spanish primary sources, Tornero shows how slavery, fed by the