

viewed as relatively safe annuities, for widows and children were often the beneficiaries. Astonishing amounts of money were involved. One merchant, a certain Baltasar Rodríguez de los Ríos, born in Huelva, had 140,000 pesos at risk. Four members of the *cabildo* of Mexico City in 1622 had more invested in censos than did the convent of San Jerónimo. Such sums, Martínez López-Cano dryly observes, were “nothing to sneeze at” (*nada desdñable*).

The author also provides a detailed profile of borrowers, as well as their occupations and social statuses. Quite clearly, credit offered access to real property, for there were various ways in which censos could finance the purchase and sale of assets. It seems that censos often permitted substantial borrowing against equity, so the ups and downs of property values had a material effect on aggregate demand. Does this—the wealth effect—explain part of the “decline of Mexico” in the nineteenth century? Did falling asset values, affected by growing turmoil and increasingly insecure property rights, depress demand? Some as yet unpublished work points precisely in this direction.

This is a well-researched and intelligent study. One feels grateful to the Instituto de Investigaciones Históricas of the UNAM for publishing it.

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*Los hijos del trabajo: los artesanos de la ciudad de México, 1780–1853.*

By SONIA PÉREZ TOLEDO. Mexico City: El Colegio de México; Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Iztapalapa, 1996. Maps. Tables. Figures. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. 300 pp. Paper.

Pérez Toledo's excellent book on artisans in Mexico City joins a growing body of fine works on the nineteenth-century capital by a new generation of scholars trained at El Colegio de México. Like the recent books by Carlos Illades and Ariel Rodríguez, *Los hijos del trabajo* is a model of careful scholarship that deepens our knowledge of one of the least-understood periods in Mexican history.

Unlike most studies that begin or end with independence in 1821, Pérez Toledo's narrative straddles the independence wars in order to determine the long-term impact on the artisan community of the twin blows it suffered from the Bourbon attacks on guilds and the republican free trade policies. She finds that although the status and living standards of many artisans declined because of the loss of protection, the guilds had a longer life than previous historians have assumed. Reminding us that conclusions based solely on the study of laws are often wrong, Pérez Toledo discovers that guild structures and customs persisted long after their “abolition” in 1814. The guilds may have lost their legal status and their monopoly of production, yet masters continued to train apprentices in the traditional fashion; artisans continued to march in civic processions in their guild groupings; and some guild *cofradías* continued to dispense aid to their members, at least until the end of the 1830s. Indeed, the survival of the corporate mentality led to the creation of a new organization in 1843, the Junta de Fomento de Artesanos, which defended the collective interests of artisans by publishing the *Sema-*

*nario Artístico*, lobbying for protectionist tariffs, promoting improved training of artisanal producers, and founding Mexico's first mutual aid society. Although the Junta united artisans from many sectors, they retained vestiges of their former separate organizations in the 25 constituent groups (weavers, shoemakers, silversmiths, sculptors, etc.) that were represented on the central board by "presidents" elected according to the old guild procedures. The Junta thus provides a link between the supposedly extinct guilds and the mutual aid societies that proliferated in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Pérez Toledo's research is impressive. She sensitively reconstructs the world of artisans from a myriad of primary sources that includes municipal censuses, minutes of the city council, records of the Vagrants Tribunal, and newspapers. She is as comfortable presenting quantitative data on the demographic profile of artisans as she is culling the testimonies of accused vagrants for snippets of their voices. Her analysis of these documents is meticulous, with implications that apply beyond her narrow subject. She persuasively argues, for example, that most population estimates of the period are inflated—although her estimates, which omit the floating population of homeless street people, may in turn be too low. She provides detailed tables, appendixes, and maps that will serve as useful reference guides for future scholars interested in such topics as the geographic zone of influence from which Mexico City drew migrants, or the definitions of the many occupations listed in manuscript censuses.

Particularly noteworthy are Pérez Toledo's conclusions about the stability of Mexico City during the first half of the nineteenth century. In documenting the enduring importance of artisans—approximately 9 percent of the city residents and 28 percent of the economically active population in both 1794 and 1842—she challenges the thesis of the decline and eventual disappearance of the artisan sector that was first posited by Luis Chávez Orozco in 1938. She corrects more recent mistakes in the literature by demonstrating that production did not move out of the city center during those five decades. Not only did the size and location of the artisan sector remain relatively unchanged, but so too did the number of manufacturing workshops, the ratio of masters to apprentices, and the predominance of textile workers (though they were impoverished as a consequence of competition from imported goods). These remarkable continuities in city life will have to be taken into account by those who view this period as one of dramatic transformations.

In short, *Los hijos del trabajo* is a major contribution to the history of Mexico in the nineteenth century. It will also be welcomed by those who study the history of Latin American labor and urbanization.

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