
Reviews

Cabotajes Novohispanos: Espacios y contactos marítimos en torno a la Nueva España. By Guadalupe Pinzón Ríos. (Mexico City, Mexico, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Institute of Historical Research, 2021. 455 pp.)

A pathbreaking historian of Pacific commerce in Hispanic America, Guadalupe Pinzón Ríos is drawn to small-time regional businessmen and the native and Afro-Latino people who crewed their ships.¹ If we follow the Manila galleon from Asia, we sail past Alta and Baja California, then cross to the mainland, passing Zacatula to the Acapulco terminus, and on to Guatemala in Central America. This last acted as a bridge between the Pacific and the Atlantic, where ships from Britain arrived at Jamaica. The subject of this volume are the mercantile actors who knew hidden coves linking local producers and consumers to wider imperial flows of merchandise.

Pinzón herself introduces us to Rodrigo Phelipe Medina of Guatemala who in 1692 sought a permit to trade between Guatemala and Pacific New Spain. Spain frowned upon ships sailing from Acapulco south, out of fear they would sell Asian goods for Peruvian silver, which latter would then never arrive in Spain. Furthermore, Mexico City merchants did not want ships sailing back from Central America to Acapulco for fear that low-cost Pacific cacao would compete with the Atlantic variety that they distributed. Medina sidestepped these political landmines, asking only to ship vanilla and dyes from Ixtlapa and Michitoya in Guatemala to Huatulco in New Spain, i.e., promising not to stop at Acapulco where he might have picked up Asian goods, nor to sail from Sonsonate in Central America, where he might have picked up cacao from Guayaquil. New Spain denied the request. Pinzón traces a concerted effort from 1682 to 1693 by Guatemalan merchants to

1. *Hombres del mar en el las costas novohispanas*, Mexico City, (2014), and *Acciones and Reacciones en los puertos del Mar del Sur* (2011), both published by UNAM and Instituto Mora, Mexico City.

learn from each petition's failure, so that one merchant succeeded by 1693. Her readers will know that in the 1680s Viceroy's brought mercury from Peru to Acapulco—and sent back contraband Asian goods to Lima. If the Viceroy's favorites traded in the Pacific, surely these regional actors had a right as well.

An intriguing contribution by archaeologist Mariana Favila Vazquez introduces us to the thirteenth- and fourteenth-century trading routes of the native people of Cihuatlán, along with their riverine technology based on gourds. Cihuatlán is a coastal region of four indigenous languages that includes the port of Zacatula, where Hernán Cortés built ships in his effort to cross the Pacific. Cortés was allied with Tlaxcala against the Mexica, and when Favila explains that the river Balsas flows from Tlaxcala all the way to the Pacific at Zacatula, Cortés's choice of port receives context. Favila's specialty is the technology of the ingenious rafts. Cutzeo means gourd, and the town of that name in Michoacan produced gourds as flotation devices underneath rafts made of cane. Vazquez quotes a 1693 merchant of the Manila galleon who used such craft on the road from Acapulco to Mexico City. Two native men swam across the alligator-infested Balsas River, using one hand to paddle, and the other to pull the merchant on his gourd raft.

María Fernanda Valencia Suarez tells us that prior to the 1655 English settlement of Jamaica, Jewish Portuguese traders lived there, and she has the unenviable task of making readers sympathize with the Christian and Portuguese communities who later became rivals to sell African slaves to Hispanic central America. In the seventeenth century, the Royal African Company unloaded slaves in Kingston after the dire Atlantic crossing, and the local traders purchased the near-dead on the cheap. The English and Portuguese locals occasionally succeeded in returning Africans to health, and then sold them into slavery in Central America or Cuba, locations but one week's voyage from Jamaica. Big business in the slave trade was conducted by the Royal African Company (RAC), and later the East India Company (EIC). Valencia criticizes "free" market politicians in Britain who put their support behind the large monopolies (RAC and EIC) rather than supporting the small-time merchants of Jamaica's slave trade.

Rodrigo De la O Torres has written a thoughtful essay on English/Spanish relations in seventeenth-century Yucatan. Campeche was the center of Spanish activity with trade links to Havana and Veracruz, while Puerto Real was an illegal English enclave with ties to Jamaica. De la O Torres's excellent map indicates the locations of the wood known as *palo de tinte*, used for dyes. An

estimated two thousand English woodsmen out of Jamaica would cut the lumber and stack it on the beach for later pickup. Yet English ships not only picked up the lumber stacked by the English, but also stole the wood stacked by the Spanish near Campeche. Yet a certain Alonso Mateos suggests that it wasn't all pillage, behind the scenes the English made payments to those around Campeche.

Rafal Reichert takes us to Jamaica in 1713, when EIC agents replaced the English Jamaicans in selling slaves along the Spanish American coast and islands. Members of Parliament favored the EIC in which they held shares, and Jamaican merchants lost out. Yet Reichert points out that the English Jamaicans had an ally in their battle against the EIC: the Miskito people of the Central American coast. This alliance made the Jamaicans masters of smuggling contraband into Spanish Central America. As Minister of the Indies from 1726, José Patiño advised the Spanish Crown to crack down on English contraband. This led to the 1739–1747 war of Jenkins's Ear—Jenkins being an English captain whose ear was reputedly cut off by Spanish corsairs off Florida, such as Pedro de Garaicoechea who in 1747 captured twelve English ships. By 1750, the EIC had lost the right to sell slaves in Spanish America. Yet neither the slave trade nor contraband disappeared, but rather passed back into the hands of the wily English Jamaicans and their Miskito allies.

Several essays focus on 1796 to 1808, when regional actors adapted to Spain's loss of dominance on the seas after the Battle of Trafalgar. Luis Mezeta introduces the 1799 Yucatan merchant Josef de Barbachano whose ship was seized by a British man of war. Barbachano produced a false British document that gave him safe passage. Yet to rescue a second Yucatan ship captured by the English, Barbachano nonetheless gave his cargo away to the British. In 1800, the danger of the English enclaves in Yucatan in times of war was made manifest to the incoming viceroy when the ship carrying him from Spain to Veracruz was captured off Campeche.

Between New Orleans and Veracruz, Estela Roselló Soberón writes of commercial power wielded by local authorities. In 1798, a Frenchman sailed for Veracruz, only to wreck on the desolate coast. It took the two survivors nine days to find a human. Spain had a standing practice of giving a reward to those identifying contraband trade, and two local officials rushed to be the first to alert the authorities. The customs officer organized native people on a nine-day march through rivers to recover the cloth merchandise, yet he did not win the prize, which went to a local lieutenant. Yovana Celaya Nández

continues the exploration of Veracruz's hinterlands by examining the conflict over profits between a town that built boats and another that raised cotton. She tells us the Consulado of Veracruz in 1812 was losing its preeminence as New Spain's major port and blamed Bourbon Reform back in 1778 for opening up too many ports.² Despite acting as Spain's main port in the Americas for centuries, Veracruz was dangerous for mariners. Underwater archaeologist Flor Trejo Revino attributes the accidents to shallow waters, shoals, shifting winds, and heavy traffic in a tight space. Only brigs and schooners were capable of maneuvering in such waters.

Francisco Altable extends this volume to the far north, when he explains that José de Gálvez in 1768 united the Californias with Sonora and New Galicia through the naval shipyard at San Blas—a marine infrastructure that tied a region together. The critical staff from the mercantile perspective were not missionaries, but rather the commissaries of San Blas and Loreto, and later the *habilitados* (supply masters) who distributed rations and ran stores at presidios. Altable compiles the names of men holding the positions. He calculates that defending the Northern Pacific plus the Gulf of California cost only 4.5 percent as much as defending the Caribbean. Yet the Spanish state held down spending by paying farmers in the hinterlands of San Blas too little for their produce and by paying sailors on its ships too little for their labor. Gálvez's frugality set conditions that left the region from Guaymas to San Francisco ripe for contraband trade.

Luis Alberto Arrijoa argues that drought from 1800 to 1805 caused a plague of locusts near Sonsonate in Central America which drove up grain prices such that ships came from Acapulco, Callao, and Valparaiso. Since other essays discussed the 1796 to 1808 crisis in Spain's ability to supply Spanish America, the reader was not entirely convinced that the climate crisis was the primary reason that ships from as far away as Manila were docking at Sonsonate. Alvaro Alcántara López reminds us that historians are storytellers, and indeed many of these volumes tie human stories to discussions of structural change.

Pinzón's volume has convinced this reader that small ports in out-of-the-way regions from the Yucatan to California were tied to rhythms of

2. Antonio Ibarra in 2021 explained where Veracruz' trade went: San Blas in the Pacific witnessed a ten-fold increase in trade between 1808 and 1814, making it more important to New Spain than Veracruz for the first time. See: Antonio Ibarra, "El Mercado Interno Novohispano en el Diluvio: Guerra Civil, Comercio Directo y Reorganización Especial, 1813–1818," *América Latina en la Historia Económica* 28 2 (2021): 1–44.

transoceanic trade from 1680 to 1815. It is intriguing that Jesuit exploration of both sides of the Gulf of California took place from 1680 to 1697, coinciding with the years in which Pinzón's Guatemalan merchants expanded commerce in the Pacific.³ How contraband took place is something the literature rarely discusses. These authors take us closer by introducing Hispanic mercantile actors at regional ports who challenged Spain's restrictions, Mexico City competition, and even English pirates. With this volume, Pinzón is charting a fruitful research program.

Keene State College, USNH

MARIE CHRISTINE DUGGAN

A Place at the Nayarit: How a Mexican Restaurant Nourished a Community.
By Natalia Molina. (Oakland, University of California Press, 2022. 294 pp.)

A Place at the Nayarit is an intimate exploration into the meaning that food spaces have in Latinx immigrant communities. The Nayarit was what Molina describes as a foundational “place making” space that fostered rich fictive kin ties within Los Angeles and Mexico. The restaurant was first established as a business around 1943, and this book focuses primarily on the Nayarit location in Echo Park on Los Angeles's Sunset Street which opened in 1951. This restaurant was meticulously run by Molina's grandmother, Natalia Barraza, who operated as a well-connected figure in the neighborhood's Latinx community. In fact, the Nayarit was quite unique because it was created and maintained by a single Mexican woman in a time where immigration and city policies targeted and scrutinized single Mexican women in the United States.

This restaurant, named after Barraza's hometown Nayarit, was a Mexican establishment that proudly cooked *Nayarit* Mexican food—an important distinction when considering that many Mexican restaurants of this time made a profit off catering to a primarily white clientele who expected a homogenized and Americanized version of Mexican food. The pride taken in making specifically Nayarit Mexican food quickly established the tone and direction of Barraza's Nayarit. Molina also stresses that the pride in making familiar hometown food was deeply intertwined with the restaurant's status

3. In review, M.C. Duggan, “Las Redes de Comercio de Contrabando en el Golfo de California Entre 1665 y 1701 Como Motora de la Expansión Jesuita,” in *Contrabando, redes de negocios y corrupción en Hispanoamérica, siglos XVII-XIX* ed. Guillermina del Valle (México: Instituto Mora).