La fortaleza docta: Elite letrada y dominacion social en Mexico colonial (siglos XVI-XVII) (review)

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The Americas, Volume 58, Number 2, October 2001, pp. 300-302 (Review)

Published by Cambridge University Press
DOI: *https://doi.org/10.1353/tam.2001.0093*

vision of credit to poor peasants" (p. 61). Documentation is sparse on how the system actually worked at the local level, but the author sees the magistrates' sometimes violent methods of debt collection as more the exception than the rule. In general, the repartimiento compensated for weak market integration. It was designed to reduce the risks and transaction costs of the alcalde mayor, but it also, Baskes argues, reduced the economic uncertainties faced by the Indian producers. Profits were good for the Spanish officials (between 6 and 17.5% in one case), but not as high as some scholars have thought. There is also a suggestion that cochineal production may have been more profitable for some Indians than has previously been supposed.

The book concludes with a detailed analysis of prices and costs involved in each step of the cochineal trade between Oaxaca and London and Amsterdam. The author makes a strong case that the steep decline in cochineal production beginning in the 1780s was triggered primarily by decreased demand in Europe; the abolition of the repartimiento in 1786 was a contributing factor, but of secondary significance.

This volume is an important, well-researched addition to the small but growing literature on the repartimiento. Its microeconomic perspective helps us to understand the economic rationality of the system, both for Indian producers and Spanish middlemen. The political dimension of the repartimiento, how it was shaped by the exercise of power, receives less attention. Too much, I think, is made of the apparent fact that many peasants accepted repartimiento credit voluntarily, and too little of the political and economic circumstances that led them ("forced" them?) to make decisions that were not always in their best interests. Was the repartimiento a coercive system? Acceptance of credit may have been voluntary, but repayment often was not, and this is where resistance and violence sometimes entered into the picture. It is difficult to judge how common these were from the evidence presented in this book. In this respect, the enigma of the repartimiento continues.

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La fortaleza docta. Elite letrada y dominación social en México colonial (siglos XVI-XVII). By Magdalena Chocano Mena. Barcelona: Ediciones Bellaterra, 2000. Pp. 415. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. No price.

This impressive volume examines Mexico City's letrados and their dominance in the cultural, social, and political world of New Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. A revised and expanded Version of a 1994 dissertation entitled "Colonial Scholars in the Cultural Establishment of Seventeenth-Century New Spain," the book provides a case study of "la ciudad letrada" that Angel Rama depicted in 1991.

For Chocano Mena, "letrados" is an umbrella term for persons who had mastered Latin rather than the more commonly employed reference to men who had ten years of university study of civil or canon law. Her broader designation includes university-educated Spaniards who were secular and regular clergy, attorneys, jurists,

physicians, and held selected government positions, a total of less than one percent of New Spain's population in the mid-seventeenth century.

The author provides a coherent and complex analysis of the formally educated Spanish (peninsular and Creole) elite that began to coalesce soon after the conquest of New Spain. Friars initiated and the growing number of letrados expanded a religious and intellectual divide between Spaniards and natives that had profound social and cultural implications. Most letrados believed that the natives had limited intellectual capacity and thus an inferior knowledge of Christianity. Characterizing pre-Conquest religion as satanic, Spanish clerics proceeded to lump together as idolatrous all *vicios populares* practiced by natives and mestizos after the Conquest. Denigrated and excluded from higher education, New Spain's non-Spanish population was largely limited to manual labor, an activity that reinforced their position at the base of society.

While letrados marginalized the native population, they simultaneously developed an educational system as the base for their cultural "fortress." Knowledge of Latin opened the door to higher education and subsequent employment, most frequently in the diocesan clergy and religious orders. Limiting natives to elementary education effectively precluded them from ecclesiastical and civil preferment. Thus letrados could monopolize clerical and a number of government positions while confirming the social value of such offices.

The author bases much of the book on works by letrados published in Mexico City from 1539 to 1700. Her analysis of more than 2,300 titles demonstrates that, although Castilian publications grew rapidly after 1600, publications in a native language were less numerous, a consequence of the dramatic decline in native population and the religious orders' loss of their initial fervor. Her close reading of the publications' dedications reveals much about patron-client relationships, relationships that most frequently involved clerics.

Through careful examination of sermons and other publications, Chocano Mena has uncovered numerous statements related to New Spain's frequent and often bitter political conflicts in the seventeenth century. Typically these are couched in the imperial and universalistic language common to the Habsburg era. Immersed in an intellectual perspective conditioned by Catholic orthodoxy, authors routinely emphasized the characteristics of a Christian king and the centrality of the Church as a support for good government and political order. From the letrados' elevated perspective, anyone who lacked their education was apt to be tainted with religious heterodoxy and an appropriate target of investigation by the Inquisition. Thus the Holy Office, itself staffed by letrados, buttressed "la fortaleza docta."

Chocano Mena has presented a convincing explanation for the emergence of a broadly defined letrado elite in New Spain and a compelling argument for its central intellectual role. While the importance of formal education for aspiring clerics and some government officials is well known, the detailed cultural and social context in which she situates the letrado elite is without precedent. Based upon extensive research in printed primary materials, particularly from the seventeenth century, and

a solid secondary bibliography, Chocano Mena's study is an important contribution to the intellectual and cultural history of New Spain during the Habsburg era.

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The Tepehuan Revolt of 1616: Militarism, Evangelism, and Colonialism in Seventeenth-Century Nueva Vizcaya. By Charlotte M. Gradie. Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2000. Pp. x, 238. Notes. Bibliography. Index. $40.00 cloth.

Charlotte Gradie's study of the 1616 Tepehuan Revolt is, to varying degrees, an examination of the revolt itself, an investigation of the maturation of the Jesuit "project" in Spanish North America, and an analysis of the development of Spanish frontier policy more generally. Gradie proposes moving beyond the standard explanations for the revolt—as the work of the Devil, in the Jesuits' estimation, or attributable to the "treacherous character of the Tepehuanes," as others would have it—to a "cultural interpretation" that considers the Tepehuan perspective, too often, she argues, left out of the analysis entirely.

Gradie begins with an examination of the prehistoric Tepehuan, and of early Tepehuan/Spanish contact in the sixteenth century. She looks as well at the initial Jesuit missionary endeavor in La Florida, analyzing the impact of that failure on the Jesuit project later developed for New Spain and northern Mexico. She establishes the historical context from which the three actors emerge: the Tepehuanes shaped by centuries of contact with intruders, most recently the Spaniards; the Jesuits smarting from their failures in La Florida and refocusing their mission efforts to emphasize language learning, gathering the indigenous people into villages, and maintaining good relations with Spanish authorities; and the Spanish authorities themselves, moving away from the unsuccessful policy of *guerra a fuego y a sangre* toward a "peace-by-purchase" approach.

In Gradie's telling, the story of the Tepehuan Revolt is a story of Jesuits misreading Tepehuanes. The Jesuits learned much from their hapless ventures in La Florida, not least of which was to deal directly with the natives rather than through intermediaries, and to do so in the native language. But for all their much-touted linguistic ability, which ostensibly allowed them to understand Tepehuan society at its core and to use that understanding to effect "true" conversions, the Jesuits seem to have completely misunderstood the Tepehuanes. Their insistence that the Tepehuanes "live in peace with their neighbors" marginalized Tepehuan warriors. Missing the significance of warrior culture to the Tepehuanes, Jesuits missed the aspect of Tepehuan culture that most threatened their missionary efforts.

The revolt, the warriors' response to marginalization, represented the second attempt to revitalize Tepehuan culture. The first effort, the Jesuits' initial efforts to reorganize Tepehuan society within missions, had not improved their lot; that failed revitalization forced Tepehuanes themselves to initiate a "nativisitic revitalization" which proposed removing all vestiges of Spanish life and customs (and, in the process, all