

collectively or independently, made certain aesthetic and material choices about how to express their deepest beliefs” (1).

The recent debates of archaeologists, anthropologists, and historians on religious materiality could have been pursued further, yet the volume innovatively explores the significance of material cross-references. All these materials were valued as transformative matter and thereby gained cultural meanings as “efficacious, active agents essential for the maintenance of the social order and the bestowal of divine blessings” (6). Artisans, therefore, are addressed as experts in material transformation and aesthetic achievements. Their knowledge of materials’ mutability and sensory qualities was crucial to transform matter into meaningful things, as much as were their investments in time, labor, and resources.

The volume follows the stories of matter and making that granted such sophisticated objects the capability to evoke affective resonances. These material transformations are the basis for these luxury artifacts’ significance for social and political hierarchies. We learn that artifacts were produced for specific individuals, and are taken through an exploration of the objects’ meanings as extensions of bodies. The roles of long-distance trade, artifacts’ mobility, and the material connections and artistic exchange across the Americas will certainly stimulate further innovative research.

Without a doubt, a detailed discussion of how new material worlds impacted European craft cultures would have significantly added to the volume. Its main achievement is to present a wide range of rare artifacts, dispersed across the international landscape of museums and framed with thought-provoking research that bridges the disciplines of archaeology, art history, ethnohistory, history, and linguistics. Above all, this book makes the reader wish to have seen the exhibition in person, and this is one of the best possible readings that an exhibition catalogue could engender.

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CONQUESTS

Contesting Conquest: Indigenous Perspectives on the Spanish Occupation of Nueva Galicia, 1524–1545. By Ida Altman. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2017. Pp. 152. \$24.95 paper.
 doi:10.1017/tam.2018.51

Ida Altman’s slim and eminently accessible book is a splendid addition to the growing Latin American Originals (LAO) series. Altman’s succinct analysis of the early phase of Spanish incursions into western Mexico provides a captivating picture of the complex

encounter between European and indigenous peoples and its termination in an internecine conflict. Altman relies on legal testimony, chronicles, and letters from political actors and witnesses, thereby giving the reader a history of conquest on the ground, rather than a retrospective one derived from later sources.

Following a fine introduction and an overview of the region's geopolitics, the book's four chapters trace the "pacification" process of Nueva Galicia from the 1520s through the 1540s under a less notable relative of Francisco Cortés, the infamous Nuño de Guzmán, and the viceroy Antonio de Mendoza. Yet, this is not a Hispano-centric story for Altman. Her history is a counterpoint to the long-standing triumphalist *conquista* narrative going back to Hernando Cortés and his reference to recalcitrant "Chichimecas" of western and northern Mexico who were suited to work in the region's metal ore mines. Even lachrymose histories portraying utter destruction of indigenous peoples have unwittingly subscribed to the oppressor: oppressed dialectic of the triumphalist narrative. Altman disturbs this Janus-faced monolith by presenting these western peoples of Mexico in their "stubborn indigenous resistance" (17).

The book reveals a nexus of unlikely alliances on both sides of the political conflict that culminated in the Mixton War of 1540-42. Chapter 1 contains a rhetorically sharp letter of criminal complaint to the Royal Council of the Indies from the exiled indigenous ruler and Christian convert Francisco Tenamaztle (24-31). The targets of this letter were Nuño de Guzmán and his appointed captains the Oñate brothers and Miguel de Ibarra. It declared them guilty of enslavement, branding, and murder in their pursuit of gold and silver. As Altman suggests, the letter's moral grammar of tyranny, restitution, and native self-defense echoes the indefatigable Dominican canon lawyer and bishop Bartolomé de Las Casas, who likely had a direct influence on its drafting in Spain in 1555.

Chapter 2 delves into more of the harsh realities of the conquest, juxtaposing a self-serving account from Guzmán and a biting description of his impunity from one of his captains, Cristóbal Flores. Guzmán presents himself as an agent of justice and the crown who is bringing order and destroying the unnatural sins of idolatry and transvestism (51-58). By contrast, Flores vividly recalls Guzmán's misdeeds of burning, torturing, and hanging natives who did not meet his uncompromising demands of tribute and precious metals (35-50). This chapter lays bare the brutal mechanics of conquest and its imposition of fear and terror on native inhabitants. Further explanation of colonial procedures like the Requirement and rituals of taking possession would have made it better yet.

Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the events surrounding the Mixton War, including the indigenous uprising and its eventual suppression under Viceroy Mendoza. These chapters demonstrate that native pueblos and their leaders took various stances in the conflict with invading Spaniards. There were organized rebels with clandestine strongholds (*peñoles*), such as the Cazcanes and Zacatecas, whose insubordination meant to Spain that they were consorting with the devil. Altman ably shows that the real core of the resistance was opposition to the coercive *encomienda* institution (65-66,

69). Tragically, there were also unwilling intermediaries like the Xalisco pueblo whose people were “forced into complicity with the Spaniards” despite efforts to remain neutral (119). In the end, their obedience to Spain only reinforced tributary labor.

Altman deftly accentuates the fact that Spaniards needed indigenous allies (*indios amigos*), such as the ruler from central Mexico, Francisco de Sandoval Acacitli, later appointed ruler over the Chichimecas. Indigenous allies were crucial actors in the practice of forced occupation. Cortés’s legacy of conquering natives by dividing them remained the norm for succeeding campaigns in western Mexico. Nevertheless, as Altman argues in Chapter 3, Sandoval was no mere pawn. His alliance with Spaniards “represented an opportunity to revive the warrior traditions that the Spanish overthrow of the Aztec Empire had suppressed” (96). This testifies to the plural forms of indigenous agency within a colonial project that exploited tributary labor in mines, cotton fields, and cacao orchards. Though the book lacks a robust conclusion, it forges a luminous path for specialists and teachers eager to navigate the struggles that defined Nueva Galicia and the New World more broadly.

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COLONIAL STUDIES

Imagining Histories of Colonial Latin America: Synoptic Methods and Practices. Edited by Karen Melvin and Sylvia Sellers-García. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2017. Pp. xvii, 280. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$65.00 cloth doi:10.1017/tam.2018.52

Esta es una obra de metodología inspirada en el estado actual de las investigaciones en historia colonial latinoamericana en el campo de la religiosidad. Como señalan en la introducción las editoras, Karen Melvin y Sylvia Sellers-García, lo que se persigue es sugerir al lector la pertinencia de una aproximación sinóptica al estudio del pasado, es decir, la de seleccionar creativamente no uno sino varios métodos con el fin de apuntalar una investigación histórica preocupada por la generación de nuevas perspectivas y prácticas. Igualmente, una propuesta fundamental de ambas editoras es postular que la eficacia de las narrativas surgidas de una aproximación histórica imaginativa depende de las preguntas abiertas que uno se hace en el proceso de la investigación. Dividido en cuatro partes y 16 capítulos, este importante libro procura partir asimismo de una pertinente reflexión sobre la articulación entre experiencias personales, influencias académicas y criterios de investigación. Los artículos reunidos reflexionan sobre el modo en que los historiadores dan respuesta a las interrogantes con las que empiezan o terminan sus investigaciones. La lectura del conjunto de artículos que componen la obra sin duda invita a reflexionar críticamente, y hasta a cuestionar, la