

## ELITES IN NEW SPAIN

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*CREDIT AND SOCIOECONOMIC CHANGE IN COLONIAL MEXICO: LOANS AND MORTGAGES IN GUADALAJARA, 1720–1820.* By LINDA GREENOW. (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1983. Pp. 249. \$17.50.)

*HACIENDAS AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT: GUADALAJARA, MEXICO, AT INDEPENDENCE.* By RICHARD B. LINDLEY. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1983. Pp. 156. \$19.95.)

*OLIGARQUIA Y PROPIEDAD EN LA NUEVA ESPAÑA, 1550–1624.* By JOSE F. DE LA PEÑA. (Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1983. Pp. 308.)

*EL GOBIERNO DE LA CIUDAD DE MEXICO EN EL SIGLO XVI.* By GUILLERMO PORRAS MUÑOZ. (Mexico: Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México, 1982. Pp. 515.)

*LA PROPIEDAD TERRITORIAL EN MEXICO, 1301–1810.* By GUADALUPE RIVERA MARIN DE ITURBE. (Mexico: Siglo Veintiuno Editores, 1983. Pp. 357.)

The works selected for consideration here focus on elites and the power structure into which they fit. Following the publication of major works by Charles Gibson and others, an important period of study on the ethnohistory of colonial Mexico began. That trend has been followed in recent years by an incipient resurgence of works dealing with elites. Yet the study of elites today has undergone a significant change from earlier periods. Prior to the growth of ethnohistory, one could focus on the elites and ignore the masses that supported them. While one seldom finds that kind of research now, a strong argument can be made that the elite studies of today are merely the ethnohistory of the conquerors rather than the conquered. Moreover, each elite now appears placed into a social, economic, and political context, rather than as a class apart from the constraints of reality. This sense of context clearly sets the five books under review here apart from earlier studies of elites.

This selection of works consists of three subgroups. Those by José de la Peña and Guillermo Porras Muñoz focus on the Mexico City elite during the first century after the conquest. The studies by Linda Greenow and Richard Lindley deal with the land and credit complex of

Guadalajara at the end of the colonial period. The last work, by Guadalupe Rivera Marín de Iturbe, serves as a kind of legalistic overview in studying land law in Mexico from the arrival of the Mexica in the Valley of Mexico until the period of Independence. Thus the five works include two microcosms and a general survey. All deal with land, wealth, elites, and their sociopolitical role in the colony.

The logical beginning of this discussion is the legal overview presented by Guadalupe Rivera Marín de Iturbe in *La propiedad territorial en México, 1301–1810*. Trained in economics and law, Rivera Marín de Iturbe dealt in previous works with more contemporary issues of social and economic planning and labor-management relations. This study clearly seeks to amplify and update José María Ots Capdequí's now classic *España en América: el régimen de tierras en la época colonial* (Mexico, 1959). That work dealt purely with land tenure, the Castilian antecedents, and their application in the New World. Rivera Marín de Iturbe's study goes far beyond that goal but limits its immediate perspective to Mexico. *La propiedad territorial en México* thus covers a longer time span but a smaller geographical area.

In dealing with such a multifaceted topic, Rivera Marín de Iturbe has drawn heavily on secondary sources along with common printed collections of documents and laws. This method allowed her to maximize both the conclusions of others and her own insights in analyzing standard sources. This methodology can be justified to a large extent for both the pre-Columbian past and much of the colonial period. Nevertheless, as recent studies have shown, many traditional notions about pre-Columbian land tenure do not withstand close analysis when using newly discovered source material. Edward Calneck's analysis of land tenure in Tenochtitlan, which uses colonial notarial and other records to extrapolate back into preconquest times, has led this generation of studies.<sup>1</sup> Lamentably, none of Calneck's works appear in Rivera Marín de Iturbe's bibliography. Likewise, Hans Prem's study of the Upper Atoyac Valley of Puebla, which brought many nontraditional sources to bear on the traditional legal source materials to interpret pre-Columbian landholding, is also absent from the bibliography.<sup>2</sup> Because the study of land tenure in the colonial period owes much to both of these authors, it is surprising that Rivera Marín de Iturbe mentions neither of them in her traditional analysis of Mexica land tenure.

In discussing the colonial period, Rivera Marín de Iturbe spends a good deal of time on the historical and legal precedents of Spanish land tenure, beginning with Roman times and continuing up to the early nineteenth century. She then details the imposition of the Spanish land tenure system through its development paralleling the *encomienda* and through the missionary efforts of the friars. She also studies such questions as the Spanish rights to conquest and domination.

The most important section of the book details the various methods of land acquisition. Clearly, the legal bases of land tenure impinge on the actual land tenure system at the moment of acquisition or alienation.

Having described the unique course of development of land tenure in Mexico, Rivera Marín de Iturbe then focuses on corporate landholding, especially by municipalities and the church. Her study of the church includes the Inquisition but does not distinguish between the secular and regular clergy. She singles out only the Jesuits for their important role in ecclesiastical landholding. Even then, Rivera Marín de Iturbe does not mention Herman Konrad's important study.<sup>3</sup>

The last section focuses on the question of the creation of the Mexican hacienda, a topic much favored by scholars since Chevalier. Rivera Marín de Iturbe's analysis continues to rely heavily on the legal codes, attempting to rationalize that vision of the system by means of the more specific visions elaborated by Gibson, Gunder Frank, Zavala, Bazant, Miranda, and Keith. Rivera Marín de Iturbe's conclusion places the *encomienda* and hacienda in distinct legal categories that enjoyed parallel developments. Like others before her, she views the development of the cattle industry in the north and the creation of *mayorazgos* in the central and southern regions as the catalysts in the formation of the classic hacienda.

While Rivera Marín de Iturbe deals in generalities, theory, and legal systems, all the other works under consideration focus on particular regions and periods. Guillermo Porrás Muñoz has produced a detailed study of the *cabildo* of Mexico City in *El gobierno de la Ciudad de México en el siglo XVI*. The book is divided into three parts, with the first consisting of a general study of the government of Mexico City, specifically the *cabildo municipal*. This part of the work draws almost solely on the *actas* of the *cabildo* itself, with some ancillary material from other primary sources and scant secondary sources. The major drawback of this kind of analysis is that the *actas* are self-serving documents that were written for particular ends under a particular set of circumstances. Although Porrás Muñoz does an excellent job of analyzing these ends and circumstances, the credibility of the source is still at issue. His masterful analysis nevertheless compares well with Moore's studies of the municipal council in Peru.<sup>4</sup>

The second section contains a detailed listing of the officials of the government of Mexico City. Included in this enumeration are the *alcaldes ordinarios* and *regidores*, with detailed notes explaining the various terms of office. Porrás Muñoz also indicates when new viceroys arrived and the reception of new *corregidores*. He occasionally mentions judges of the *audiencia*. The final large section consists of political biographies of each *alcalde ordinario* in the sixteenth century, small studies that contain a wealth of information. Again, the primary sources con-

sulted were the *actas*, although other archival material from both sides of the Atlantic help to round out the vision. Nearly any of these men could serve as the subject of a credible study, making the succinctness of Porras Muñoz's presentation even more impressive. One hopes that in the future, he will treat the *regidores* in a similar fashion. While *El gobierno de la Ciudad de México en el siglo XVI* is by no means a definitive study of the Mexico City *cabildo*, it presents a wealth of material distilled into usable form and will serve as an excellent reference tool for those interested in the political elite of Mexico City.

José F. de la Peña's *Oligarquía y propiedad en la Nueva España, 1550–1624* covers many of the same individuals. De la Peña, the son of the former director of the Archivo General de Indias, took as the basic documentary corpus for this work a collection of financial reports filed by all governmental officials in 1622. When he began his study, these reports had never even been opened before. The endeavor posed great methodological difficulties, especially for quantifying the material. While the royal decree authorizing the reports had suggested a general format, not all responses followed the suggestion. Even among those that did, the amount of detail and rounding varies greatly from case to case. Consequently, the information is useful as an impressionistic, rather than a standardized, source. Indeed, the prosopographical approach of de la Peña proved quite effective.

*Oligarquía y propiedad* draws heavily on the primary source for its information, using fewer additional archival materials than one might expect. De la Peña develops his picture of the oligarchy at a particular moment in time, minimizing in many ways the importance of historical development. While the chronological sweep of the book ostensibly covers 1550 to 1624, a more accurate period would be 1598 to 1624.

De la Peña found a commercial sector almost totally dominated by *peninsulares*. The great families that founded Mexico City had nearly disappeared from the political elite by 1624, with a few notable exceptions. Newcomers, some of them merchants and entrepreneurs, had replaced the old families, although they often married into the old conqueror lines to acquire a degree of social respectability. De la Peña describes this process as a shift of power from the *beneméritos* to the *hombres poderosos*. He perceives the base of the oligarchy as having been their control of the important municipal councils, namely those in Mexico City and Puebla, and the creation of entailed estates. His overall discussion of the power elite, as manifested through the inventories, deals at some length with the hacienda, mining, commerce, and proto-industrial complexes of the *obraje* and the *ingenio*. But the exact distribution of these sectoral specialties within the oligarchy remains unclear. De la Peña's point of view here does not stray from the elite, and thus the study's overwhelming impact remains social, not economic. Never-

theless, *Oligarquía y propiedad* has many fine qualities and ranks as an excellent piece.

Taken together, the two studies of Mexico City by Porras Muñoz and De la Peña complement one another well. They overlap chronologically enough to be useful in providing information on the same individuals and families. De la Peña emphasizes the role of the municipal elite, a point that Porras Muñoz also stresses. But Porras Muñoz clearly finds the *alcaldes ordinarios* far more interesting than the *regidores*. De la Peña views the *regidores* as the actual agents of municipal power because the *alcaldes ordinarios* served only annual terms at the pleasure of the *regidores*.

The two studies that focus on Guadalajara at the close of the colonial period also complement one another. Linda Greenow's *Credit and Socioeconomic Change in Colonial Mexico: Loans and Mortgages in Guadalajara, 1720–1829* breaks new ground in analyzing credit within a relatively small regional economy. Richard Lindley's *Haciendas and Economic Development: Guadalajara, Mexico, at Independence* focuses on economic development in the region in the era of Independence. The point of convergence of the works lies in the area of the supplying of credit to the economy and its utilization. Greenow studies the overall economy from the perspective of mortgages and liens, while Lindley delves more specifically into an entire web of commercial, familial, and social ties.

Lindley envisions the economy of the Guadalajara region as having suffered from a grave lack of capital. Credit relationships developed in order to allow the economy to grow and to stimulate production. As a result of the various political and economic reforms before 1810, additional capital in the form of cash from British concerns flowed into the New Galician economy, realigning the traditional ties that had been forged for transferring capital. Greenow, focusing specifically on the question of the movement of credit, found that although the church had played a central role as purveyor of credit in the early eighteenth century, its role had diminished by the end of the colonial period. Part of this diminution resulted from the *consolidación*, but the church's role in the credit market had begun to decline even earlier.

Lindley's *Haciendas and Economic Development* follows the path broken by Eric Van Young, who has referred to this corpus as a "boomlet" of works on Guadalajara and New Galicia.<sup>5</sup> Although Lindley studied the entire New Galician economy, he did so from the point of view of four families. His hypothesis that the extreme shortage of capital forced the development of creative credit relations results from a detailed analysis of notarial records. Pursuing the issue from the latter years of the eighteenth century into the years of Independence, Lindley concludes that the presence in the later period of British capital marked a clear divergence from the status quo ante. Likewise, the social and

commercial institutions that had governed the flow of credit and capital within the system necessarily changed with the new circumstances. The traditional dichotomy between creole and peninsular holds no validity for Lindley. Rather, the credit system brought together families and interest. He views the family enterprise, which often contained production units from different economic sectors, as central. As a curious sidelight to Lindley's analysis, an older hypothesis regarding British commercial interests in Hispanic America posited that in return for finished European goods, the British received raw materials from the Spanish colonies, with a significant component of these raw materials consisting of specie. Oddly, Lindley does not mention the impact of the consolidation on this credit system. From the chronology he presents, one therefore assumes that new credit sources had not yet begun to expand the availability of credit.

Questions of credit form the heart of Linda Greenow's study. The core documentary source of *Credit and Sociological Change in Colonial Mexico* is the registry of mortgages kept by the notary of Guadalajara, a series begun in 1721. In other municipalities, the *cabildo* maintained a central registry of mortgages. Numerous references to such a registry appear in the sixteenth-century protocols in Mexico City, but the registers were apparently casualties of a fire that destroyed nearly all of the municipal archive. These registries served the function of the modern registry of deeds in assuring that no individual piece of property received more encumbrances than its value.

Greenow accurately recognizes that the church was not a unitary institution. Its rubric covered a score of different and often antagonistic bodies, including cathedral chapters, convents, monasteries, sodalities, and other organizations. Moreover, the funds of particular pious works might fall under the administration of private patrons or ecclesiastical bodies. The only body approaching a central administration for these funds was the *juzgado de capellanías*, but that court did not intervene unless the pious work had fallen into maladministration or was suffering from some other problem requiring judicial resolution. Unfortunately, Greenow does not distinguish between mortgages and liens. In the late sixteenth century, approximately one-third of the capital reflected in church accounts came not from cash donations but from encumbrances placed on previously unencumbered properties. In terms of the aggregate credit available in the system, these encumbrances reflected actual debts, which generated interest and at some point would be paid off. Thus the overall economy grew in proportion to the creation of these encumbrances. Nevertheless, the actual utility of this credit differed greatly from the simple mortgage. The mortgage represented that transferral of capital from the lender to the recipient. The recipient could then use that capital for any purpose desired. In the

case of the encumbrance, the recipient received nothing, and the lender transferred nothing; both merely agreed that new debt had been created.

In her analysis, Greenow corroborates much of Lindley's findings on the credit market. She remarks upon the extensive social and political ties that transversed the market. Clearly, the segment of the society discussed by both authors belonged to the elite. Few representatives of the castes encroached upon the system. Indeed, Greenow also identifies an upsurge in the Guadalajara economy in the nineteenth century, which she attributes to "the Bourbon economic surge" (p. 226). Much of her analysis relates to the geographical component, no doubt reflecting her training as a geographer. In all, *Credit and Socioeconomic Change in Colonial Mexico* presents a detailed view of the credit market in Guadalajara.

The books under review here provide a systematic picture of the colonial Mexican elite. The oligarchy overwhelmingly consisted of men and women of wealth who possessed some political power and were active in the local, regional, and external economies. By and large, the dichotomy between creole and peninsular lacks any major significance in these studies. Both Porras Muñoz and de la Peña concede that the descendants of the old conqueror blood lost out to more recent arrivals from Spain, although these newcomers moved into a network of social and economic ties already forged by the beneméritos. This picture differs little from the vision of Guadalajara at the end of the colonial period in which the need for access to credit forged alliances across lines often thought to be decisive. Moreover, the elite apparently enjoyed pursuing diverse interests in the economic realm. De la Peña's inventories, Lindley's families, and Greenow's credit network all reflect this diversity. If this view can be extended to another source of recent monographs—the hacienda—the picture becomes one in which agricultural real estate was used not as a bottomless pit for capital but as one part of an overall economic program. While this line of reasoning may not signal the existence of a capitalist hacienda, rural agricultural estates certainly played an important economic role in the private finances of many of the elite. The juridical analysis in Rivera Marín de Iturbe's study of land tenure produces a similar view. Spanish land tenure legislation fostered the acquisition of land by Spanish colonists, and many impulses directed that acquiring of land toward the formation of entailed estates.

In sum, these five works reflect many of the current trends in the study of the colonial Mexican elite. Some use notarial records, while others draw on yet newer sources of information. Many more classic studies based on the *códigos* will still come forth because the urge toward prosopography undoubtedly controls the field. Yet this method-

ology has produced a great divergence between the inventory makers and the writers of integrated studies. The former produce useful reference tools, the latter, standard monographs. The study of the elite has become intimately linked with studies of the economy and politics of New Spain. As a result, most works focusing on the hacienda or the bureaucracy must at some point reckon with the elite. Thus the field of elite studies represents a major challenge for future research.

NOTES

1. For example, Edward E. Calneck, "Settlement Pattern and Chinampa Agriculture at Tenochtitlan," *American Antiquity* 37, no. 1 (1972):104–15; and his essay, "The Internal Structure of Tenochtitlan," in *The Valley of Mexico: Studies in Pre-Hispanic Ecology and Society*, edited by Eric R. Wolf (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1976), 287–302.
2. Hans J. Prem, *Milpa y hacienda: tenencia de la tierra en la cuenca del Alto Atoyac, Puebla, México (1520–1650)* (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner Verlag, 1978).
3. Herman W. Konrad, *A Jesuit Hacienda in Colonial Mexico: Santa Lucía, 1576–1767* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1980).
4. James Preston Moore, *The Cabildo in Peru under the Hapsburgs* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1954).
5. Eric Van Young, review of Greenow's work in the *Hispanic American Historical Review* 64, no. 1 (1984):160.