



PROJECT MUSE®

*Donativos, préstamos y privilegios. Los mercaderes y mineros de la Ciudad de México durante la guerra anglo-española de 1779-1783* by Guillermina del Valle Pavón (review)

Jeremy Baskes

Mexican Studies, Volume 34, Number 1, Winter 2018, pp. 121-123 (Review)

Published by University of California Press



➔ For additional information about this article

<https://muse.jhu.edu/article/737691>

España conoció una organización social jerárquica capaz de integrar la riqueza, el prestigio y el honor de los actores sociales, principios que fundamentan todas las sociedades estamentales del Antiguo Régimen.

Marcello Carmagnani  
*El Colegio de México*  
 Fondazione Luigi Einaudi

### Referencias

- Benton, Laura. “Colonial Law and Cultural Difference: Jurisdictional Politics and the Formation of the Colonial State.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 3 (1999): 567–88.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “The Legal Regime of the South Atlantic World, 1400–1750: Jurisdictional Complexity as Institutional Order.” *Journal of World History* 1 (2000): 27–56.
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Making Order out of Trouble: Jurisdictional Politics in the Spanish Colonial Borderlands.” *Law and Social Inquiry* 2 (2001): 373–401.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Law and Colonial Cultures. Legal Regimes in World History, 1400–1900*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- Semboloni, Lara. *La construcción de la autoridad virreinal en Nueva España, 1535–1595*. México: El Colegio de México, 2014.

Guillermina del Valle Pavón, *Donativos, préstamos y privilegios. Los mercaderes y mineros de la Ciudad de México durante la guerra anglo-española de 1779–1783*. Instituto Mora: México. 2016, 227 pp.

In this well researched monograph, historian Guillermina del Valle Pavón examines the impacts on Mexican trade of Spain’s financial struggles during the War of American Independence. Spain’s entry into the war forced the Crown to seek funds for shipbuilding and other military needs wherever possible. As the author reminds us, this led to the familiar practice of securing donations and loans from wealthy Mexicans in exchange for commercial and other privileges.

In the cases that del Valle Pavón examines, the largest amounts were secured from the wealthy Consulado merchants who could gather substantial sums with relative ease. Officials’ discovery that the Consulado was hiding illicit funds in an account called “sobras de alcabalas,” that in 1776 contained in excess of one million pesos,

provided an ideal opportunity for the Crown to demand a donation from the commercial body. The 300,000 peso “donativo” that followed probably contributed to Viceroy Bucarelli’s decision not to punish any transgressors for the secretive accumulation of these monies. Del Valle Pavón describes how the Viceroy also raised large donations from the Gremio Minero, whose members generously contributed an additional 300,000 pesos to Spain’s military endeavors, encouraged unquestionably by the Crown’s simultaneous decision to allow the miners to organize a “cuerpo formal” that would rival the merchants’ Consulado. This long-sought concession granted by the Crown illustrates how politics and economics intertwined in New Spain. Well-to-do individuals or corporations obtained political influence in exchange for their financial backing of the monarch.

As the author describes, war with Great Britain imposed harsh commercial costs on Spain and its colonies. With its naval superiority, Great Britain succeeded in virtually shutting down Spain’s transatlantic trade, forcing Spain to adopt emergency commercial policies. Relaxation of some of the stringent trade regulations provided yet another opportunity for the Crown to solicit funds.

Indeed, in the middle section of this book del Valle Pavón explores Mexico’s flourishing Pacific commerce during the War of American Independence. Focusing especially on the merchants Francisco Ignacio de Yraeta and Isidrio Antonio de Icaza, the author examines the reorientation of New Spain’s commercial activities to the comparatively peaceful Pacific sea routes. Her main focus is the exploding trade in Guayaquil cacao, which benefitted greatly from the virtual cessation of competing cacao exports from the Caribbean port of Caracas. Yraeta and Icaza, and many other traders, brought repeated large shipments of cacao from Guayaquil paying with Mexican commodities as well as Asian imports.

While the chapter on cacao seems somewhat tangential to the book’s ostensible topic, del Valle Pavón connects the themes by suggesting that licenses to engage in Pacific commerce were distributed primarily to those who extended “suplemento” interest free loans to the Crown. In 1782 alone Viceroy Mayorga received nearly 500,000 pesos in “empréstitos” from merchants deeply engaged in the Pacific cacao trade. Every concession provided the Crown with an opportunity to extract new resources. The author’s discussions raise interesting questions: historians have always implied that merchants and others who provided the Crown with donativos and empréstitos saw these as the costs of doing business, an inevitable expense to maintain the positions and privileges needed to successfully engage in remunerative economic activities. While plausible, one cannot

help but wonder whether such “bribes” truly paid off or whether their issuers were not also driven by other motivations. Donativos entailed large reductions of capital and loans to the Crown might not be profitable or fully repaid. When the savvy merchant Manuel García Herreros lent 230,000 pesos to the Crown, a “cantidad gigantesca,” as the author notes, with which one “could buy a large hacienda or construct an 80-cannon battleship,” could he really have been primarily driven by the hope that “he was given authorization to trade foreign goods through Acapulco,” especially when others gave much less and seemed to win those same trade rights? (106). Could the benefits extracted by García Herreros truly have compensated for the risks to his fortune? Might he have been partially motivated by patriotism, reputation, or illustriousness? These are questions at least worthy of contemplation; economic explanations alone seem incomplete. This monograph supplies a wealth of information. The main focus is government finance during the War of American Independence, and it also adds to a number of other topics such as trade during wartime and Mexico’s important integration into Asian trade networks.

Jeremy Baskes  
*Ohio Wesleyan University*

---



---

Ernest Sánchez Santiró. *La imperiosa necesidad. Crisis y colapso del Erario de Nueva España (1808–1821)*. Colección de Historia Económica, Instituto de Investigaciones Dr. José María Luis Mora / El Colegio de Michoacán / CONACYT: México. 2016, 488 pp.

The economic history of Mexico’s late colonial period, including conflicts over independence, has received less attention than it merits. Earlier scholarship contended that New Spain’s Treasury collapsed due to the exigencies of financing the wars against insurgents. The historiography has certainly painted this period in bold, dramatic strokes. This picture is not so much mistaken as too simple, because it does not adequately explain a process that profoundly contributed to the fate of Spain’s prized colonial domain, which emerged as a financially weak and troubled independent nation in 1821. It is, however, crucial to have a more precise understanding of this region’s economic performance and in particular that of the operation of the Treasury during these turbulent years, in order to