

Colonial Latin American Historical Review

Volume 5
Issue 1 *Volume 5, Issue 1 (Winter 1996)*

Article 4

12-1-1996

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Recommended Citation

Van Young, Eric. "Thomas Calvo, Poder, religión y sociedad en la Guadalajara del siglo XVII." *Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 5, 1 (1996): 75. <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/clahr/vol5/iss1/4>

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Book Reviews

Poder, religión y sociedad en la Guadalajara del siglo XVII. By Thomas Calvo. (México: Centre d'Etudes Mexicaines et Centraméricaines, 1992. 423 pp. Tables, notes, bibliography. \$35.00 cloth.)

This eloquent, profoundly researched, and insightful history of religious sensibility and social structure during Guadalajara's formative period deserves wider study and appreciation than it has received in the nearly four years since its publication. A companion piece to Calvo's other 1992 volume, *Guadalajara y su región en el siglo XVII: población y economía* (Guadalajara: Ayuntamiento de Guadalajara and Centre d'Etudes Mexicaines et Centraméricaines), it comprises half his 1987 Sorbonne doctoral thesis. As the author himself points out in the population/economy volume, the work is consciously modelled on such great *annaliste*-style French doctoral theses detailing the history of major cities and their regions over long periods of time as Pierre Goubert's *Beauvais et le Beauvaisis* (Paris, 1960). There are as yet few if any studies of early modern Latin American cities to equal in detail, comprehensiveness, or conceptual sophistication the numerous French works in this vein. Certainly one or another social aspect or economic sector of various Latin American cities may have been studied, but rarely with the *histoire totale* approach deployed by Calvo. This makes his two volumes something of a pioneering work, all the more so because he concentrates on Mexico's neglected seventeenth century. On the other hand, the total history approach betrays the vice of its virtues: a certain amorphousness of conception and a lack of any readily summarized central hypothesis or conclusion. Instead, we have a brilliantly drawn portrait of a great provincial city in its adolescence—a complex textual montage whose individual chapters can certainly be read with profit, but whose total effect amounts to more than the sum of its parts.

The organization of *Poder, religión y sociedad* moves in a series of eleven chapters from the formal structures of state and ecclesiastical political power—the Audiencia of Nueva Galicia, the Bishopric of Guadalajara, the great monastic and conventual establishments—through a discussion of popular and elite piety and ritual life, to a detailed treatment of ethnicity, class, elite and popular social characteristics, and forms of deviance and resistance. Archival sources in Guadalajara itself and Spain have been mined deeply, and Calvo displays an absolute mastery of the rich *tapatío* historiography. While the evidence is often of a quantitative nature, the treatment is not, the exposition shifting between mini-narratives, biography, anecdote, "thick

description," and passages of general sociological analysis. The authorial voice throughout is typically French: conversational, engaging, mildly ironic. Calvo is particularly apt at showing the human side of institutional life, as in the two portraits of the early *audiencia* presidents Vera and Baeza, a pair of corrupt tragedians (Calvo calls them *pandilleros*) whose sorry careers, nepotism, and relations with local colonial society he uses to exemplify much about early Nueva Galicia. Calvo is perhaps at his best in discussing religious sensibility, concluding that the formal institutional structures of the church proved largely irrelevant to a robust popular baroque piety which, nonetheless, shared a degree of consensus with elite religious ideology, expressed through a common marian cult, public icons, and civic ritual life. He provides an interesting account of the practice of magic (mostly erotic in nature and a theatre of feminine resistance) especially by Afro-Mexicans, which reached its apogee in the early seventeenth century when New Spain and Europe were awash in similar practices. In terms of the city's social structure, Calvo notes the absence of Indian population; instead he finds a largely bipolar socio-ethnic distribution embracing a small, relatively wealthy but "fragile" creole elite and an increasingly impoverished, mixed-blood working and dependent population, with considerable social fluidity in middling groups.

For the most part, Calvo convincingly disputes the thesis of a stagnant or immobile seventeenth century, whether in demographic, economic, social, or religious life. In a short review one can only begin to hint at the findings in a work of such descriptive complexity.

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