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## Robert L. Kapitzke, Religion, Power, and Politics in Colonial St. Augustine

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*Religion, Power, and Politics in Colonial St. Augustine.* By Robert L. Kapitzke. (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001. 219 pp. Illustrations, map, notes, glossary, bibliography, index. \$55.00 cloth.)

In the Spanish colonial empire, the Catholic religion has always been assumed to be "an ordering force that regulated human interaction and located the individual in broader systems of belief and customs" (p. 4). Most of the published works on this subject focus on the effect of the Catholic church on Native peoples residing at missions on the northern frontier. Few studies have been undertaken on the role of the religious orders within the context of Spanish urban settlements. Robert Kapitzke more than fills this gap with his study of religion in the Spanish colonial town of St. Augustine, Florida, which was founded in 1565. By concentrating on this small frontier military settlement on the edge of the Spanish colonial empire, Kapitzke presents this complex subject on a human scale over a period of some eighty years.

For most of its first one hundred years, St. Augustine was a minor military post, with a predominately male and military Spanish population. In response to the establishment of English settlements in the Carolinas in the 1670s, Spain expended a large fortune to create a permanent stone fortress on the south Atlantic coast and, in doing so, created a large civilian population of professional craftsmen, laborers, and merchants who moved to St. Augustine to assist in the building of the Castillo de San Marcos.

The religious needs of Spanish civilians and soldiers would be met by a clergy whose main role in Florida had previously been the conversion of Southeast Native peoples. From the 1670s to the end of the French and Indian War (1763), English attacks on Spanish missions enslaved thousands of Native peoples and forced the remaining mission Indians to congregate around St. Augustine. These external pressures would be reflected in "myriad controversies involving the parish church in St. Augustine" the civil and military authorities, and the clergy responsible for Native peoples (p. 3).

The Catholic clergy received support for their activities, including administration of sacraments, observation of holy days, and the presentation of religious pageants. Additional funds for the clergy came from conducting masses, marriages, and burials. The major cause of religious friction in St.

Augustine was the often conflicting goals of the civil and military administration and the clergymen's efforts to enforce religious law.

The author shows how, throughout the late-seventeenth century, simple conflicts over issues such as ecclesiastical asylum polarized the community, which would result in the governor of La Florida being excommunicated. The governor, in response, would ask for help from the clergy's superiors in Cuba, who responded by holding Inquisition proceedings, where the governor's supporters were accused of heretical blasphemy, further dividing the community. Resolution of these conflicts took years, and often the major participants died before having their names cleared of any wrong doing.

Conflicts also developed between the Franciscan clerics who served different groups within the community. The regular clerics served the Native peoples congregated in and around St. Augustine, while the secular clerics served the Hispanic population. The constriction of Spanish Florida into the confines of St. Augustine caused the physical boundaries between the clerics to overlap. Additionally, minor transgressions, such as deciding where a person would be buried—at the convent of San Francisco or the parish church of the city—and who should officiate, erupted into "issues of personal honor and respect" (p. 124). In one instance, the parish priest hid the body of the wife of a former governor, rather than allow her to be buried in the San Francisco convent, thus denying him burial fees.

A larger issue in these disputes was secularization, or acculturation, of converted Native people into the larger Spanish colonial world. Regular clerics were to establish missions and convert Indians, but seemed loath to give up their authority over these people to civil and religious authorities and move on to new mission fields. To continue their authority over the Indians, the regular clerics refused to teach them Spanish, as knowledge of that language determined which cleric could administer the sacraments to this group. This dispute, which began in the 1690s, would continue until 1746, when the Spanish Crown formally dissolved the Florida missions, which the British had burned out decades before, and granted ecclesiastical rights to all St. Augustine residents, including Indians, to the parish cleric.

Throughout the eighteenth century, the author notes a decline in the historical record of disputes between clerics or clerics versus civil authority. The author attributes this to the reforms of the Bourbon Spanish Kings (Carlos II and Carlos III), who successfully curbed the ecclesiastical rights and authorities once enjoyed by the religious orders. In the 1680s, the clerics had used their religious power to force a governor to flee to Havana, but by the 1750s governors could overturn long-held traditions of religious asylum and simply remove people from the parish church without fear of excommunication.

The topic of religion in the Spanish colonial world is an extremely complex one. Robert Kapitzke does an excellent job of explaining how the religious orders worked, why they undertook the actions noted in the historical record, and how this played out during an eighty year period which witnessed great change in Spanish La Florida. This volume is highly recommended for anyone wishing to comprehend the role of religion in the Spanish colonial period.

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