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## Yanna Yannakakis, *The Art of Being In-between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca*

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## Book Reviews

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*The Art of Being In-between: Native Intermediaries, Indian Identity, and Local Rule in Colonial Oaxaca.* By Yanna Yannakakis. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008. xxi + 290 pp. Illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index. \$79.95 cloth, \$22.95 paper.)

Yanna Yannakakis' study reveals much about the intersection of imperial policies and local politics in the pueblos of Oaxaca in the period 1660-1810. Because of their biculturalism, status, and negotiating skills, native intermediaries acted in significant ways to shape the contours of local society and their relationships with the colonial state, as well as to find a role for themselves as local rulers. However, the author argues that the Bourbon reforms with their twin goals of state centralization and direct rule undermined the influence of these intermediaries and constricted the space within which they negotiated power and authority.

Native leaders walked a tightrope, befriending Spanish officials and settlers while trying to retain the trust of their people. One native *fiscal* (most were sons of the nobility) lost his life at the hands of his own people for divulging their practice of idolatry. This violent reaction sparked the 1700 Cajones rebellion in which both Indian elites and commoners participated. Even fighting for the legal rights of their people proved to be a risky endeavor. The *ladino principales* Felipe de Santiago and Joseph de Celis played key roles in retaining electoral autonomy for one hundred pueblos in the late seventeenth century, but at the cost of antagonizing the *alcalde mayor* who viewed both men as economic competitors. Consequently, Santiago and Celis were charged with sedition, thus illustrating the high-stakes rivalry between native and Spanish power brokers.

The Cajones rebellion provided a pretext for both the Catholic Church and the Bourbon State to exert greater authority over the countryside. The Church sought to chip away at the Dominicans' power by stationing more priests in the rugged terrain of Oaxaca. The Bourbon state aimed to impose standardization and hierarchy throughout the realm, thereby negating the flexible, *costumbre* concept as enunciated by the widely-read seventeenth-century Spanish jurist Juan de Solórzano. In the pitched battles between *cabecera* and *sujeto* towns, with the latter aspiring to be in the former's privileged position, the native leaders' ability to explain *costumbre* and their recollection of the oral tradition and deployment of historical memory became invaluable, especially to Spanish magistrates. In the eighteenth century, however, the consideration of local or regional *costumbre* in litigation cases became less viable as the Spanish-imposed, *cabecera-sujeto* model took hold. In fact, royal jurists "disregarded local custom as a legitimate source for legal decisions," thus avoiding the need for a native intermediary (p. 127).

This is not to say that autonomy-minded commoners, local practices, or native elites saw better days. According to Yannakakis, Spanish *alcaldes*

*mayores* continued to defer to *costumbre* with regard to electoral disputes, and they did not interfere with the native officials' oversight of such home industries as cochineal and cotton mantle production, whose finished products the *alcaldes mayores* marketed in accordance with the *reparto de efectos*. This native control contrasts with the mining draft over which cabildo officials had little authority and which was much more disruptive to indigenous subsistence. As a Spanish economic enterprise, it was important for the Bourbons to extract more revenues out of its colonies. The contrast between native and empirical control suggests the limits of the Bourbon reach, an assertion which post-independence, local resurgence supports.

In fact, as Yannakakis argues, native intermediaries made themselves indispensable by constructing a political culture based on cabildo autonomy and multiethnic expression despite Bourbon efforts at centralization and ethnic homogenization. The remoteness of the area and the practical immunity to pervasive Spanish influences also provided a sufficient political space not only to native leaders, but commoners as well. However, with little historical documentation concerning commoners, their agency or contribution to shaping indigenous identity remains unknown. Nonetheless, Yannakakis' detailed analysis of a variety of sources—land disputes, legal petitions, idolatry trials, indigenous pictorial histories—is a worthy addition to the recent boom in sociocultural history that seeks to contextualize the use of language in the past.

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*Vital Enemies: Slavery, Predation, and the Amerindian Political Economy of Life.* By Fernando Santos-Granero. (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2009. x + 280 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendix, bibliography, index. \$65.00 cloth, \$24.95 paper.)

Fernando Santos-Granero asserts persuasively that slavery was not a product of colonial relations, as other scholars have argued. To the contrary, this book argues that "captive slavery" existed among the tropical Amerindian societies since before the European invasions and until fairly recently. The author shows the effects on indigenous societies by comparing six different indigenous groups that practiced captive slavery: the Calusa of Florida, the Kalinago (also known as Caribs) of the Caribbean, the Tukano of the Vaupés River Basin in Amazonia, the Conibo in the Ucayali River Basin in eastern Peru, the Chiriguaná (more commonly known as Chiriguano or Ava-Guaraní) of the foothills of the Andes in southeastern Bolivia, and the Guaicurú of the Gran Chaco in Paraguay. Santos-Granero bases his comparisons exclusively on published sources, encompassing a period from the sixteenth to the twentieth centuries.