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Robert L. Kapitzke. *Religion, Power, and Politics in Colonial St. Augustine: The Writings of Medieval Spain's Converted Jews (Florida Museum of Natural History: Ripley P. Bullen Series).* Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001. 219 pp. $59.95 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8130-2076-1.

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Published on H-Florida (June, 2006)

Colonial St. Augustine as Religious Microcosm

The study of Spanish Colonial Florida has often meant the study of the Spanish Catholic Mission system. The difference, over the years, between styles of historical inquiry into this topic has generally been one of degrees. Early on, historians focused on the conquerors who entered Florida and brought the cross with them, as typified in Michael Gannon's *The Cross in the Sand* (1967). They focused on such figures as Ponce de Leon or Pedro Menendez de Aviles and on the wider diplomatic-political decisions of Spanish expansion. In the last few decades of the twentieth century, anthropologists joined historians in their study of Florida, and the new focus was on the local chiefdoms and their interaction with the Franciscan friars, such as seen in two anthropological works, both of which came out in 1998. John Hann and Bonnie McEwan dealt with the Apalachee, while John Worth looked at the Timucua.[1]

Robert L. Kapitzke's work *Religion, Power, and Politics in Colonial St. Augustine* goes in a new direction, distinct from both of these earlier trends. Whether written by a Borderlands historian or an archaeologist of the 1990s, most of the scholarship on Colonial Spanish Florida has been concerned with Franciscan missionaries. Indeed, many of the studies done are concerned with Florida as an extension of a wider system, as a place where two (or three or more) cultures meet. Kapitzke departs from this model and examines what was going on within the walls of St. Augustine itself. In Kapitzke's hands, the city of St. Augustine becomes a microcosm in which to examine the ambiguous relationship between secular and ecclesiastical authorities, as well as the tensions within the ecclesiastical itself. In order to do this, Kapitzke studies the role of the parish priest in St. Augustine. Just as looking at the friars of the mission system brought knowledge about the Apalachee or the Timucua, looking at the parish priest inevitably yields information concerning the lives of everyday colonists.

This choice is refreshing, to say the least. Kapitzke successfully demonstrates the importance of the parish priest in the lives of the colonists. Catholicism, according to Kapitzke, was a stabilizing force in the city, creating a sense of community among a disparate population. Most importantly, *Religion, Power, and Politics in Colonial St. Augustine* shows the interconnectedness of a colonist's dual roles: that of a Spaniard and that of a Catholic. In order to understand the colony of St. Augustine and its role in wider affairs, one has to understand its religious overtones.

Kapitzke does not, however, use these themes to praise colonial religious life or extol the virtues of the clergy (in stark contrast to the Borderlands scholars of the mid-1900s). His work is a strong religious and political analysis of the secular and the religious in St. Augustine, including the many conflicts. The governor and the parish priest were quite often at odds with one another. Here Kapitzke found a perfect chance to analyze the roles of Spaniard and Catholic where they conflicted. By studying this fascinating conflict, one can see signs of a wider problem: the demands of twin loyalties in early modern Spanish culture, and how they were resolved.

Note

[1]. John Hann and Bonnie McEwan, *The Apalachee Indians and Mission San Luis* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998); and John Worth *The Timucuan Chiefdoms of Spanish Florida* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1998).

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Citation: Chris Beats. Review of Kapitzke, Robert L., *Religion, Power, and Politics in Colonial St. Augustine: The*

Writings of Medieval Spain's Converted Jews (Florida Museum of Natural History: Ripley P. Bullen Series). H-Florida, H-Net Reviews. June, 2006.
URL: http://www.h-net.org/reviews/showrev.php?id=11861

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