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in the Humanities & Social Sciences

Peter Bakewell. *A History of Latin America: Empires and Sequels 1450-1930.* Oxford and Malden, Mass.: Blackwell Publishers, 1997. xxiv + 520 pp. $86.95, cloth, ISBN 978-0-631-16791-4.

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Published on H-LatAm (August, 1998)

This is a wonderful but strange entry in the select list of general histories of Latin America in English. In recent years, only a small group of historians have attempted a single-volume survey of five centuries of Latin American history: Benjamin Keen's *A History of Latin America* first appeared in 1980, and is now in its fifth edition.[1] Brad Burns' *A Concise Interpretive History of Latin America* (1972, sixth edition, 1994) was for many years the principal alternative to Keen, and offers a much more idiosyncratic and synthetic vision.[2] In 1992, Edwin Williamson entered the field with *The Penguin History of Latin America*, with a very traditional text that stresses institutions, politics, and culture.[3] The principal alternative to these ambitious single-volume texts has been Oxford University Press's trilogy covering the colonial period, the nineteenth century, and the twentieth century.[4]

A History of Latin America is the first volume published in Blackwell's History of the World series, projected to be sixteen volumes. Peter Bakewell certainly was a fine choice to author the volume on Latin America. Educated at Cambridge in the late sixties, Bakewell came to the U.S. in 1975 where he taught at the University of New Mexico until 1989, when he moved to Emory University. One of the finest historians of colonial Latin America, he has written outstanding books on silver mining in colonial Mexico and Peru.[5] Few historians today can match his knowledge of the two core regions of Spanish America.

Bakewell divides his survey into six parts containing seventeen chapters. Although averaging out to about a page per year of coverage, this text is very heavily weighted toward coverage of the colonial period, and, more specifically, the sixteenth century. As Bakewell says in the preface, "in the history of Latin America, the sixteenth century is not only the most interesting but the most important period" (p. xv). (I fully agree with Bakewell here.) Accordingly, nearly a third of the volume deals with this crucial century. Part I, "Bases," introduces "Lands and Climates," "American Peoples," and "Iberia" in three excellent chapters and a little more than fifty pages. Nearly two-thirds of the chapter on native peoples is devoted to the Aztecs and Incas. Surprisingly, the Maya barely get a passing mention. The Iberian background chapter provides a nice introduction to

early voyages into the Atlantic and the construction of late fifteenth-century Spain.

Part II, "Approaches," also has three chapters, one on "Columbus and Others," one on "Experiments in the Caribbean," and another on "Military Conquest." In less than fifty pages, Bakewell provides an excellent synthesis of discovery, conquest and early colonization. Again, this is a wonderful overview. In particular, Bakewell's discussion of the role of the Caribbean as the testing ground for Spain's empire in the Americas and his careful analysis of the Spanish military conquest are masterful analyses. He very effectively conveys the contingencies and factors that contributed to the victory of small numbers of Spaniards over enormous Indian populations.

Bakewell is at his best in his treatment of the sixteenth century. Part III, "Domination" is one of the best syntheses of sixteenth-century Spanish America I have ever read. In four chapters and a hundred pages, Bakewell examines the administration of Spanish America, the church, society, and the economy. He blends chronology, politics, institutions, social, and economic history offering a wide-ranging and nuanced vision. He moves easily from the particular to the general.

After one hundred pages on the sixteenth century, Part IV, "Mature Colonies," moves on to Spanish America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in roughly the same amount of space. Chapter Eleven, "The Seventeenth Century: A Slacker Grip," again, is an outstanding synthesis, especially of the issues and aspects of the old debate over the so-called "seventeenth-century crisis" in both Europe and America. (He argues that there was no economic decline in Spanish America.). Chapter Tweleve, "Eighteenth-Century Spanish America: Reformed or Deformed?" looks at the Bourbon reforms and the developing maturity of the Creole societies across the region. Both chapters adroitly cover the larger Spanish transatlantic imperial world, something that scholars trained in England always seem to do so much better than U.S.-trained historians of Latin America.

Finally, after nearly three hundred pages, Brazil makes an appearance. Part V, "Portugal in America," is a pause in the survey of Spanish America. Other than a few references, especially in the discussion of the early voyages, the text up to this point is a history of Spanish America. In about fifty pages, Part V surveys three centuries of Brazilian history. A good overview, Bakewell is obviously less comfortable and less sure of himself in this section. Although other surveys (Keen, for example) set aside separate sections to discuss Brazil, they also do a much better job integrating Brazil into the larger story. (Lockhart and Schwartz's ***Early Latin America*** and Burkholder and Johnson's ***Colonial Latin America*** are better at achieving this integration.)[6] This chapter also reflects one of the largest weaknesses of the volume, its discussion of slavery in the Americas is much weaker and less satisfying than its treatment of Indian labor.

Part VI, "Self-Discovery: The Nineteenth Century and Beyond," covers the century after independence in roughly one hundred pages. Chapter Fourteen, "Independence," is a reasonable survey of the complicated regional struggles, but it is a bit too detailed for my tastes. It certainly does not have the synthetic strengths of Richard Graham's ***Independence in Latin America*** or Jay Kinsbruner's ***Independence in Spanish America***.[7] Bakewell then covers the next century in two chapters, one called "Adrift in Storms: Caudillos and Penury," and a second which covers the last part of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century called, "Calmer Waters and a New Course: Oligarchs and Exports." This is a lot of material to cover in one hundred pages, and he faces the same problem we all do when teaching this material--the emergence of so many separate stories and the difficulties of generalizing the way we tend to do for earlier centuries. A brief "Epilogue" completes the volume, and Bakewell ends on the

issue that so characterizes and defines Latin America--racial and cultural mixture. He concludes by noting that, "Not only was the American Europeanized, but the European Americanized. And in the convergence lies the present and future identity of Latin America" (p. 462).

What sets Bakewell's text apart from other single-volume surveys, and makes it an oddity, is his choice of chronological coverage. His beginning date (1450) is no doubt to provide the background for the Iberian and imperial expansion that precedes Columbus' voyage. But why 1450? Why not 1415 (the symbolic beginning of Portuguese expansion with the capture of Ceuta) or 1469 (the marriage of Fernando and Isabel unifying Spain)? Latin America does not exist until 1492. Why not just begin there? While debate over the beginning date may be quibbling, even more questionable, Bakewell ends his survey in 1930, presumably because of the Great Depression. After expressing doubts about his own ability to write about the recent past, Bakewell says, "The study of Latin America over the past half-century is, for me, the territory of political scientists, economists, sociologists, and other social scientists" (p. xv). (I guess that this historian has written two books that should have been written by social scientists!) Whatever the intellectual merits of his position, it is hard to imagine what his publisher was thinking when it agreed to this end date. Who will use this book for class? It would be wonderful for a colonial survey, but then the last one hundred pages of the book goes unused. One could not use it for a full survey to the present, because it is missing material on most of the twentieth century. In short, it is too long for the colonial survey, and unusable as the text for the survey course that covers post-independence Latin America.

Furthermore, Bakewell's book will not be very satisfying for those looking for more cultural history. (The endnotes indicate a very heavy reliance on more traditional social and economic history.) The volume is very heavily Spanish American in its orientation (says the Brazilianist). Finally, the level of detail in the discussion, at times, may be overwhelming to students in an introductory course. (Although I very much appreciated the careful discussion of the data on mining production in the seventeenth century, for example, one wonders if this is really necessary for the introductory student.) As a point of comparison, Bakewell's colonial survey will probably be more comprehensible to the introductory student than the rich and complex synthesis in Lockhart and Schwartz. The chronologies and reading lists at the beginning of each part are also helpful.

In short, this is a wonderful survey of the colonial period, especially the sixteenth century. It provides us with an excellent combination of political, social, and economic history within the larger Hispanic world. Although it emphasizes the core regions of Mexico and Peru, it sweeps across other regions to the very periphery (with New Mexico making some interesting appearances). As a historian of "modern" Latin America, I was constantly struck by the insights and synthetic judgments that Bakewell offers. I learned from this book. It just might work as a text for those teaching the colonial survey, but it is not the Great Latin American History Survey Text that we have been waiting for.

Notes:

[1]. Benjamin Keen, *A History of Latin America*, 5th ed. (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1996). Keen's survey also comes in a split, two-volume version. A sixth edition is in preparation. For a review of the 5th edition of Keen see, Marshall C. Eakin, "Latin American History: The Whole Story," H-LatAm, May 1996.

[2]. E. Bradford Burns, *A Concise Interpretive History of Latin America*, 6th ed (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1994).

[3]. Edwin Williamson, *The Penguin History of Latin America* (London: Penguin, 1992).

[4]. Mark A. Burkholder and Lyman L. Johnson, *Colonial Latin America*, 3rd ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997); David Bushnell and Neill Macaulay, *The Emergence of Latin America in the Nineteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988); and, Thomas E. Skidmore and Peter H. Smith, *Modern Latin America*, 4th ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996).

[5]. Peter Bakewell, *Silver Mining and Society in Colonial Mexico: Zacatecas, 1546-1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971); *Miners of the Red Mountain: Indian Labor in Potosi, 1545-1650* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984); *Silver and Entrepreneurship in Seventeenth-Century Potosi: The Life and Times of Antonio Lopez de Quiroga* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1988).

[6]. James Lockhart and Stuart B. Schwartz, *Early Latin America: A History of Colonial Spanish America and Brazil* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Burkholder and Johnson, *Colonial Latin America*.

[7]. Richard Graham, *Independence in Latin America: A Comparative Approach*, 2nd ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc, 1994); Jay Kinsbruner, *Independence in Spanish America: Civil Wars, Revolutions, and Underdevelopment* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1994).

Citation: Marshall C. Eakin. Review of Bakewell, Peter. *A History of Latin America: Empires and Sequels 1450-1930.* H-LatAm, H-Net Reviews. August, 1998.

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