Book Reviews

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Sarah C. Chambers, *Families in War and Peace: Chile from Colony to Nation* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2015), pp. xi + 288, £66.00, £17.99, pb.

Sarah Chambers, whose first book *From Subjects to Citizens: Honor, Gender and Politics in Arequipa, Peru, 1780–1854* (Pennsylvania: Penn State University Press, 1999) received much well-deserved critical acclaim, has produced another excellent monograph on Spanish America's transition from colonialism to independence and its highly conflictive process of state-building. This new book focuses on the centrality of family to nation-state formation in Chile. As Chambers states from the outset, numerous historians have already 'noted the familial language of revolution' (p. 3), and the 'frequent metaphorical references to the nation as family in Chilean political culture' (p.16). In this sense, the author's topic of enquiry is not particularly new, and the broader picture she maps out of a paternalist and patriarchal state does not come as much of a surprise to readers. Her contribution to existing scholarship on these subjects lies instead in the detail she provides – her excavations of that 'familial language' and those 'metaphorical references' from an impressive amount of archival material – and the fact that she goes far beyond the official proclamations of Chilean state officials by delving into the intricacies of policy formulation and implementation.

Exploring disputes about the seizure and restitution of property, military pensions, custody of children and family maintenance allowances – through a vast array of primary sources, including personal letters, official communiqués, petitions, ecclesiastical and civil lawsuits, courts-martial, state decrees and congressional laws – Chambers shows us exactly *how* paternalism and patriarchy in Chile functioned. We learn how new legislation came into being, how this was implemented, and how a variety of different people (across the social spectrum) engaged with, experienced and responded to it. For example, we gain some insight into the internal diversity of the fledgling state apparatus through a description of the competing agendas of state attorneys and treasury officials (p. 168); we see the difference between ad hoc, temporary decrees and increasingly cohesive, enduring and institutionalised legal processes; and we are impacted by the (often uneasy) co-existence of Spanish colonial law and new republican legislation (with the *Siete partidas* on pp. 182–3). Perhaps more significantly, this study shows us how it was often the persistence of mothers, widows and other guardians that forced changes in family law, or forced legal changes to be applied in practice. In other words, it pays as much attention to people's requests and demands of government as it does to government decision-making, and thereby avoids presenting these changes as an exclusively top-down process.

One of the main conclusions of *Families in War and Peace* is that the state position shifts from paternalist responsibility (in the early nineteenth century) to patriarchal authority (by the mid nineteenth century), or from 'from mending families to reinforcing hierarchies of wealth and status' (p. 212). This shift is mapped out against the backdrop of military struggles for independence, internal political rivalries following

independence, continuing conflict in the south, efforts to consolidate a centralised government, war against the Peru–Bolivia confederation, and civil war in the 1850s. It is also set against the life history of Javiera Carrera (1781–1862), the sister of executed independence leaders Luis, Juan José and José Miguel Carrera. The two storylines work well together, for the 'personal' and 'political' become intimately intertwined, and this helps to engage the reader.

One especially interesting theme of the book is that of networks: kin-based networks, how they functioned and when they mattered. In particular, the author illustrates the importance of marriage for commercial enterprises, and for the consolidation and transmission of property. Another welcome theme, though much more implicit, is that of transnational connections: *Families in War and Peace* is a nation-focused study, but the Chile that we read of here certainly did not function in isolation. Peru and Spain were common destinations for fleeing royalists. Peru also offered a home to many patriot figures when post-independence political upheavals forced them into exile. In addition, we find out about illustrious Peruvians who visited Chile, about commodity circuits between Lima and Santiago, and about the Chilean state's sequestration of assets belonging to residents of Peru. The United Provinces of La Plata (later Argentina and Uruguay) crop up repeatedly, as does the United States, where numerous Chileans formed important alliances (the son of Javiera Carrera, for instance, was educated there). Vice versa, many US citizens – as well as British, Irish and French people – migrated to post-independence Chile. The references are often fleeting: the Englishman Ricardo Dunn appears and disappears in one sentence; indeed, it is not really him that appears, but rather his Chilean widow and her petitions for a pension (p. 129). The larger picture these fragments point to, however, is an important and compelling one.

It also raises the question of Chilean 'exceptionalism' in Spanish America. Chambers usefully references existing scholarship on family law in Argentina, Mexico, Nicaragua and Venezuela, and offers tentative comparisons, but explains that to do any more than this is not her objective here. 'Only further research', she remarks, 'will demonstrate whether the Chilean state was distinctive or simply more successful than other governments in implementing policies that refashioned paternalist governance from royal to republican terms' (p. 11). This is not necessarily a weakness, but I was slightly disappointed not to see more in-depth discussion of the differences and similarities between Chile and its neighbours, especially given the author's expert knowledge of Peruvian political culture, and her participation in important edited collections on the continent as a whole, for example *Honor, Status and Law in Modern Latin America* (Duke University Press, 2005).

I noticed one other gap as I read through the absorbing material. Conflict-ridden southern Chile serves as an important setting for much of the history that Chambers documents, and yet the very obvious racial dimensions of the process of state-building as it unfolded here, while touched upon, are not explored in any depth. Indigenous inhabitants of the 'frontier' region appear for the most part as 'barbarous Indians' and enemies of the new republican state. Certainly, many members of the political elite saw them as such, but to leave it at this misses the fact that Mapuche people were also imagined as brothers in the 'greater Chilean family' by some early independence leaders, not least Bernardo O'Higgins and Ramón Freire.

Of course, no book can deal with all aspects of the chosen topic of study. I was just a little surprised – considering the author's previous works – by the kind and extent of the gaps that I found in *Families in War and Peace*. There is no doubt, however, that it

offers an unequalled examination of family law as it developed in Chile during the first half of the nineteenth century.

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Nancy E. Van Deusen, *Global Indios: The Indigenous Struggle for Justice in Sixteenth-Century Spain* (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2015), pp. 352, $94.95, $26.95; £18.99, pb.

The historiography has usually presented the sixteenth-century debates about the status of the indigenous inhabitants of the New World as theological, political, legal and philosophical battles between Spanish protagonists such as Bartolomé de las Casas and Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, each arguing in favour or against the 'condition of the "Indians"' as free vassals of the Spanish Crown. The debates revolved around such fundamental issues as sovereignty, freedom and humanity, questions that became ever more pressing in a world that since the late fifteenth century had expanded and diversified at an incredibly rapid pace. The figure of Las Casas emerged from the debates, struggles and intense activity representing opposition to the *encomienda* that took place in the Americas and in Spain as the champion of the Amerindians' rights. Nancy Van Deusen's book investigates the crucial themes of the debate from a different angle: that of the men and women who were taken to Castile as slaves and who years later sought their freedom through the legal system. By choosing this alternative viewpoint to investigate the problem of Indian slavery, Van Deusen has produced an innovative study that urges historians and scholars of other related disciplines to reconsider a number of key categories currently used to understand Latin American colonial history and, to a great extent, the early modern world.

Global Indios studies a specific time period, the sixteenth century, and focuses on a discrete group of people: enslaved Amerindians living in Castile who went to the courtroom demanding no less than a change in their status and to become free men and women. The number of documented cases is not large, as the author explains, but the analysis of the sources and the discussion of the themes the book offers is extremely detailed and the argument compelling. The investigation covers a range of levels: from local history and individual stories, to transatlantic and global ambits, from the problem of cruelty and abuse to the examination of the concept of slavery and the shaping of the category of *indio*. Contrary to the notion that enslavement of Amerindians did not involve a large number of people, especially since Queen Isabela's well-known intervention against the practice and the corresponding decree issued in 1501 declaring Indians free vassals of the Crown, Van Deusen's book reveals its continuity and extent, and demonstrates that its impact was considerable. Indio slaves were taken from their places of origin in Central America, South America and Brazil to locations within the continent, with many reaching cities and villages in the Iberian peninsula, where they were usually placed as domestic servants.

The chapters explaining the new circumstances in which enslaved men and women were forced to live offer a rich discussion of the social milieu and culture that shaped the position assigned to captive Amerindians in Castile. Castilian society at the local level was in turn transformed by the incorporation of the new arrivals and the news and novelties coming from different corners of the world. To a great extent, enslaved