

demonstrates how creole pactism was easily translated into constitutionalism once the central government in Spain collapsed under Napoleonic boots. The Cádiz experiment on constitutionalism in 1812 was a preamble for a renewed constitutionalism in Central America and Chiapas in 1821. However, as Herrera points out, it is important to also remember the experience with self-government during the crisis of the Spanish Succession (1700-14). It was, after all, a matter of ideas and perceptions, even of localism, that in Costa Rica pushed the decision to create a constitutional experiment under the Pacto de Concordia, or to make Chiapas reject the authority of Guatemala and claim Mexican protection under the Plan de Iguala.

In essays on oath-taking practices, both Herrera and Xiomara Avendaño demonstrate that ideas are central to keeping order and stability, even during obvious moments of radical change. The tradition of oath-taking derived from royal Spanish tradition. When used to renew allegiances, both legal and mental, between the crown and its subjects, oath-taking served as well to legitimize the new constitutional government of 1812 and, later, the independent government of Guatemala. The use of sacred symbols and images follows the idea of repetition as a key element in the creation of new traditions, which helps to establish a direct link to the past.

In her study of the Nicaraguan revolts of 1811-13, Elizet Payne agrees on the need to revise the reasons for independence in Central America. Her inclusion of grievances brought forward by the popular classes as an important element that promoted political instability in Central America before independence shows the need to study some social aspects of local and internal conflicts in the region during that era. Pollack follows her approach in analyzing the Totonicapan rebellion of 1820, showing that local affairs surfaced once Spanish power weakened. In connection to these rebellions, Timothy Hawkins argues against the image of captain-general José de Bustamante as a villain, which was created by late nineteenth-century nationalist historians to promote a romantic story of liberation for the period of nation-building.

An excellent collection of essays on an understudied region, this book coalesces around the concept of how a “war of words” (71) can promote actions that redefine history.

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## MEXICO CITY AT INDEPENDENCE

*Mexico City, 1808: Power, Sovereignty, and Silver in an Age of War and Revolution.* By John Tutino. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2018. Pp. xxiv, 320. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$95.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper.  
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John Tutino examines the origins of Mexican independence by analyzing events in Mexico City in 1808, during Napoleon's invasion of Spain and his overthrow of the Bourbon monarchy. In the midst of the imperial crisis that year, Mexico City experienced an explosion of demands for popular sovereignty and local autonomy, demands that were ultimately contained by a military coup that overthrew viceroy José de Iturrigaray in September 1808. For Tutino, these events are especially significant because until then Spain's rule over Mexico was never in doubt as long as silver capitalism prospered. Unlike most histories of New Spain that emphasize the authoritarian and despotic nature of Spanish colonial rule, this book argues that the colonial system was characterized by mediation and negotiated compromises that gave a diverse populace rights to participate in political processes. The events of 1808, however, broke the regime, undermined Spain's ability to rule by mediation and consultation, and led to a new era in Mexican politics in which individuals came to power by armed force in the name of popular sovereignty.

The first of the book's two parts explores the silver economy of the late colonial period, from 1760 to 1810. During this period, the steady increase of silver production created economic dynamism in Mexico City that promoted social stability by containing divisions among the oligarchy and making work available for the city's inhabitants. Individual chapters examine the different social groups that resided in Mexico City, with discussions of key institutions such as the city council, the mint, and the *repúblicas de indios*. Fragmentation and divisions among the city's diverse working people made organized resistance to colonial rule difficult as long as the silver economy flourished.

Part two of the work examines the politics of the late colonial period. Here Tutino emphasizes New Spain's regime of mediation, noting that the colonial government granted indigenous communities land, local self-rule, and access to judicial appeals, which "enabled them to adapt, represent interests, appeal disputed decisions, and generally negotiate subordination during long centuries" (112). Furthermore, even as taxes increased during these years, no American Spaniard joined the riots or rebellions that erupted in the 1760s and 1770s. Instead, they continued to identify with the colonial regime. Chapters 9 and 10 transition from an analysis of the politics of empire to a narrative of the crucial events of the summer of 1808. It was during these months that thousands of Mexico City inhabitants took to the streets to demand that the city council, viceroy, and audiencia rule in the name of deposed King Fernando VII. In this atmosphere of rising social tensions and political confusion, military men allied with disgruntled merchants deposed the viceroy in September and did so in the name of the people. The coup, however, undermined imperial legitimacy and ended the regime of mediation, as high judges allowed no protest or negotiations after the viceroy's fall. In a broader context, the events of 1808 established a pattern in nineteenth-century Mexico of military intervention in politics in the name of popular sovereignty.

To help readers navigate this multifaceted history that challenges the conventional wisdom of late colonial politics, Tutino presents a six-page “terms of analysis” after the preface. Here the author analyzes 18 terms, such as *castas*, *creole*, *español*, *indio*, *mestizo*, and *pueblo*, to clarify the meanings of words that are often misleading in English-language studies of this period. The terms of analysis help to make this book accessible to an audience beyond specialists in the field. Indeed, instructors of undergraduate and graduate courses on Mexican history and Spanish colonialism should consider assigning this text to give students a new way of thinking about the imperial crisis that led to Mexico’s independence from Spain.

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## CHOLERA AND MEXICO

*Mexico in the Time of Cholera*. By Donald Eithian Stevens. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2019. Pp. 328. \$95.00 cloth; \$43.95 paper.  
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Donald Stevens uses the 1833 cholera epidemic to shine light on and rethink early republican Mexico. Cholera moves quickly, in this case spreading from San Luis Potosí, to Guanajuato, Querétaro, and Mexico City, and then throughout much of the country. Stevens focuses on these three cities as well as Oaxaca, but also makes larger and important arguments about Mexico as a whole. Cholera progresses rapidly on its victims as well: within hours, general malaise such as a headache or throbbing deteriorates into extreme diarrhea and vomiting. At this point, the afflicted and their loved ones would know that death was near, at least once the epidemic was understood as cholera. Stevens shares the stories of individuals and families as they confronted sudden and painful death, describing the mix of panic, religious resolve, resignation, and agony. He also explores how authorities sought to control or limit the epidemic.

The book is much more than a social history of this horrifying scourge. The author examines key life rituals and rites of passage, including birth, naming, marriage, and death. He uses these well-documented moments to explore, among other topics, Mexicans’ notions of sex, religion, and providence. In doing so, he advances important arguments about Mexico in the decades after independence from Spain. He does not merely put a nail in the coffin of the frustratingly pervasive view that Mexicans were hamstrung in the post-Independence period by their conservatism, their supposed ties to tradition, and the Catholic Church, but brandishes a power hammer to seal the tomb rapidly and effectively. In the best passages of the book, he shows that urban dwellers questioned the omnipotence of Catholicism, thought and debated long and hard about politics, and did not follow tradition automatically as far as daily life and