movement, but was comparatively weak on Barbados, where the planter elite remained dominant. In the 1890s annual rum consumption per head averaged about 3.6 gallons on Barbados, but only 1.0 gallon on Jamaica.

A few of Smith's arguments seem questionable. He claims as evidence for the damage to health from rum drinking the fairly close cross-colony correlation between rates of natural population decrease in the early nineteenth-century British West Indies and the volume of rum exports (pp. 150–1). A key inference here is that rum shipments overseas should be a close guide to local consumption levels. However, material presented for other dates and territories contradicts this idea. Most probably, high slave depletion and high rum export volumes had a common cause: heavy sugar crops and the toll that they took on the labour force. Also, can we be sure that black Creoles were less given to drink than imported Africans, or that nineteenth-century missionaries strengthened temperance habits among the island-born? Notions of superior European culture as a 'civilising' force may inform the contemporary claims from white observers cited to this effect. British West Indian data do not suggest any decline in rum consumption per head over the last years of slavery, when the population was becoming more creolised. Alcoholic drink imports rose immediately after emancipation, when the missionaries enjoyed their greatest prestige and influence. So might the relatively low levels of rum usage found in Jamaica by the late nineteenth century have resulted above all from the sharp decline of the island's sugar industry and of opportunities for estate employment? But these are minor or at least debatable points. Smith has made a most valuable contribution to Caribbean economic and social history.

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Gretchen Helmke and Steven Levitsky (eds.), *Informal Institutions and Democracy: Lessons from Latin America* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), pp. viii + 351, £43.50, 16.50 pb.

This is one of the most interesting and illuminating works on Latin American politics to appear in recent years. And unlike most edited collections of essays in this field it has a clear analytical focus and a strong thematic content. Its focus is informal institutions and the way they contribute to shape political outcomes. This they may do either by competing with and even subverting formal institutions, or by complementing them and sometimes helping to sustain them. The relationship between formal and informal rules cannot therefore be determined on *a priori* grounds. Much of the literature on Latin America to date has concentrated on the negative effects of informal rules, and these are not ignored. But in their introduction the editors are keen to emphasise that where formal state and regime institutions are weak, ineffective, or insufficiently democratic, informal rules may enhance the performance and stability of democracy.

Informal institutions are defined as 'socially shared rules, usually unwritten, that are created, communicated, and enforced outside officially sanctioned channels' (p. 5), in contrast to formal institutions where the rules are both communicated and enforced through 'official' channels. This is a self-conscious effort to achieve a narrow definition that distinguishes these informal institutions from political culture, but allows them to operate both within civil society and the state. This paves the way

to a useful typology of informal institutions that characterises them as complementary and so enhancing formal efficiency or effectiveness; or accommodating in ways that contradict the spirit but not the letter of formal rules; or competing and so fundamentally incompatible with formal institutions; or substitutive of formal deficiency or failure. Far from constituting some kind of analytical strait-jacket, this typology is successful in disciplining the subsequent wide-ranging discussions of the influence of informal rules on executive-legislative relations, electoral politics, party politics and the judiciary broadly writ.

The collection itself encompasses a diverse array of substantive inquiries into the operation and impact of informal institutions, including studies of the Mexican presidential *dedazo*, clientelism in Brazil and Honduras, legislative 'ghost coalitions' in Ecuador, norms of executive-legislative power-sharing in Chile, the expectations of 'electoral insurance' among *Concertación* candidates in Chile, illicit campaign finance in Brazil, norms of electoral accountability in Argentina, indigenous law in the Andes, norms underlying police violence in Brazilian cities, and mechanisms of electoral dispute resolution – *concertacesiones* – in Mexico. The analytical agenda certainly stimulates some lively discussion of these topics – and the quality of these essays is uniformly good – but at the same time it does suggest a potential pitfall of the project. Despite the effort to nail down a narrow definition of these informal institutions, there is a clear and recurring danger that a wide range of political and social phenomena – such as corruption, criminality, and some forms of state repression and censorship – will henceforth be viewed exclusively as informal institutions. In other words, the analytical advantage of the concept will be diluted as its application becomes ever more promiscuous.

There are many forms of political behaviour, organisation and belief that cannot and should not be subsumed into the notion of informal rules. Social conventions that may provide the building blocks of formal institutions – in one version of 'institutional rational choice' theory – are not necessarily informal rules. Beliefs that candidates will honour their campaign promises are expectations, but not – as claimed in one essay of the collection – informal rules. And, on the evidence of the essay on the indigenous legal systems of the Andes, these are not informal institutions, but simply different institutions that are fully formal in procedure, process and means of enforcement. These caveats do not detract from the value and originality of this collection, which deserves close attention from a wide readership. But they may become important as the analytical agenda advances.

The editors note that informal rules may originate in and through the workings of formal institutions. But there is less recognition of the reverse relationship, where formal institutions have to adapt to informal rules – if not actually emerging from them. As Guillermo O'Donnell puts it in his afterword to the collection, 'particularistic practices in informal institutions have been central to the trade of many Latin American politicians before and during authoritarian regimes [so that] the formal institutions of democracy have been, as it were, plunged into a deep sea of pre-existing informal rules and institutions' (p. 289). This complicates the relationship between formal and informal institutions in interesting ways, and explicating these complications will be central to our continuing attempts to understand the nature and dynamics of democracy in Latin America. But this will only be possible if political practices are subjected to rigorous analytical tests before qualifying as informal rules.

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