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dozens of moments in which she clearly and vividly reveals the ways in which a potentially dry topic, how documents moved around the Spanish American provinces, might be used to evoke a nexus of insights into how empire functioned; specifically, how its provinces were tied together by the flow of paperwork, and how those ties were perceived by the people who wrote, carried, read, and stored that paperwork.

This fascinating book succeeds on two levels. First, it is, despite the generality of its title, a regional study of highland Guatemala and its *audiencia* in the late-colonial period, with important attention to the early years of the independence era; most of the book's sources date from the 1770s through 1830s, and it is commendably well rooted in archival materials from the Archivo General de Centroamérica in Guatemala City and the Archivo General de Indias in Seville. Sellers-García does a fine job of conveying the nature of those sources (transparent summaries, pertinent quotes, full citations, and so on). She even makes a contribution to the study of independence, by showing how 'perceptions of Guatemalan space' (p. 141) evolved gradually in the late-eighteenth century, not as a result of the transition from empire to federation to republic, but anticipating it, even helping to make it possible. On all these grounds alone, the book should be compulsory reading for all scholars of colonial and nineteenth-century Central America. Likewise, it should also be of interest to all colonial Latin Americanists.

Second, the book succeeds as an exploration of the dynamic between the two material and conceptual categories that begin its title: documents and distance. Sellers-García is interested in how knowledge in Spain's imperial provinces was 'created along routes', 'gathered radially' (p. 19), organised on paper, shared, and preserved. Documents were generated and transported in order to 'flatten' and 'overcome' distance (pp. 25, 26), but they also reflected it and were born of it. The implications of this system of colonial knowledge production stretch all the way to the present, to us, because understanding the system 'allows us different insights into all of the documents we use as colonial historians' (p. 187). Her book's 'central claim', states Sellers-García, 'is that spatial history matters to the social history of knowledge' (p. 19); one might also view the book as an exploration of the dialectic between spatial history and the social history of knowledge. Colonial Central America makes for a good case study, because of the 'spatial and temporal distances separating places in the Spanish Empire' (p. 17), and because that empire so heavily fostered the creation and archiving of documentation. But the clarity of Sellers-García's arguments regarding these topics and their relevance to historical methodology afford them a universal applicability. It is a tribute to the stimulating way in which she has constructed her book that one cannot help but imagine ways to connect it to numerous other works of scholarship, from studies of archives in Peru and France to studies of roadbuilding and mapmaking in Mexico and India.

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Viviana Grieco, *The Politics of Giving in the Viceroyalty of Rio de la Plata: Donors, Lenders, Subjects, and Citizens* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 2014), pp. ix +298, $55.00, hb.

To help finance the nearly constant warfare of the turn of the nineteenth century, the Spanish monarchy turned repeatedly to '*donativos*', donations collected from

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institutions and subjects of the empire. Historians have traditionally viewed these donations as forced, extracted unwillingly from reluctant donors. In this excellent work, Viviana Grieco dispenses with such simplistic characterisations, arguing that *donativos* must be examined in the broader context of '*pactismo*', the notion that the Crown's legitimacy stemmed from its willingness to negotiate with its subjects. For Grieco, *donativos* became the mechanism through which individuals and groups throughout the empire buttressed their competing claims upon the monarch. Donors gave freely because they expected to be rewarded for their generosity. The Spanish Crown raised large sums because it served as the ultimate dispenser of imperial largesse. Grieco asserts that the reliance on donations rather than compulsory taxes was necessary because '… Spanish rule rested on tacit consent, voluntary appeals, and ideological hegemony rather than coercion on the part of a powerful state' (p. 7). Bourbon absolutism was more theoretical than real. What Grieco terms 'the politics of giving' provides a compelling window into a host of issues, which the author admirably addresses.

During the costly wars of the late-colonial era, *donativos* provided considerable funds to the financially squeezed Spanish Crown. Grieco examines four distinct periods in which financial exigencies led to official requests for donations in Río de la Plata, the first two during wars with France (1793–5) and England (1799–1802), the third following the 1806 and 1807 British assaults on Buenos Aires, and the last due to Napoleon's 1808 invasion of Spain. Each request offered an opportunity for colonial subjects to express their support and to press for reward. The wealthy merchants of Buenos Aires mobilised donations totalling 100,000 pesos during the war with France, but simultaneously extracted benefits from the monarch, most important the 1794 establishment of a long-sought Consulate. The merchant guild raised another 100,000 pesos during the war with England, a donation that coincided with the Crown's suspension of neutral trade, a policy that the Consulate strongly advocated. The Church also donated to the Crown, though these failed to prevent the 1798 'Consolidación de Vales Reales', after which the Church gave sparingly. The more than 100,000 pesos donated by the indigenous communities of Paraguay, Grieco contends, hastened the termination of *encomiendas* in the region, an indication of monarchical reciprocity to their donation.

Most *donativos* originated from individual subjects who were not powerful enough to negotiate a specific reward but who nonetheless anticipated future or continued recognition. Storeowners licensed to sell tobacco (*estanqueros*) regularly donated, undoubtedly hoping to retain their Crown-granted privileges. In making donations officeholders throughout the viceroyalty hoped to prolong their employment or obtain a promotion. Promotion for reasons of merit, she contends, declined.

Perhaps the most interesting portion of the book is Grieco's examination of donativos in the aftermath of the invasion and expulsion of the British from Buenos Aires in 1806, which was followed closely by a second British attempt in 1807 and Napoleon's removal of Ferdinand VII in 1808. The cowardly escape from Buenos Aires of the Spanish Viceroy Sobremonte in 1806 empowered the Porteño cabildo, which appointed Santiago de Liniers to help orchestrate the recruitment of a large militia to defend the capital from the anticipated British return. Liniers added thousands of recruits to those who had participated in the 1806 expulsion, drawing most heavily from the city's lower-ranking creoles, castas and blacks, slaves included, who gained power and prestige for their newly active roles in society. To finance the militia, the cabildo made a plea for *donativos*, producing more than 239,000 pesos

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in 1806 and 1807. A large percentage of the donors consisted of the recently recruited militiamen, who gave small gifts in support of the state. Grieco argues that these militiamen saw their donations as part of their attainment of the status of vecinos, closely equated to citizenship. As such, these plebs were engaging in the 'politics of giving', donating in exchange for 'opportunities for exercising their newly acquired rights as vecinos' (p. 11). Their donations to the cabildo legitimised their status as vecinos, respected members of the community. Once again, individuals saw their donations as investments.

Grieco is less persuasive in her attempt to argue that the Spanish system of *donativos* was superior to the fiscal mechanisms utilised by the British or French monarchs. Scholars have long portrayed the British system of taxation as most effective in raising revenues for the modernising state. Grieco challenges this conventional wisdom pointing primarily to the American Revolution, an anti-tax movement. A fiscal system that led to the overthrow of colonial rule should not be seen as effective, she suggests. Because the Spanish monarch relied heavily on voluntary donations rather than involuntary taxes, she argues, the population viewed them as legitimate. A more complete discussion of the overall fiscal effectiveness, measured in terms of amounts collected, might have bolstered this argument.

An area that Grieco might have explored more fully is the link between donativos and corruption. In her introduction, she rejects any association between the two, suggesting that donativos were different from influence peddling because '… donativos were widely accessible to individuals and groups of different social statuses' (p. 11). However, Grieco also recognises that not all donors were equally capable of asserting their expectations to the Crown. Some gifts were more influential than others. Also, one cannot help but wonder whether the officeholders who made *donativos* had a real choice. Grieco might have examined what happened to those electing not to donate to the Crown's coffers.

These minor issues aside, Viviana Grieco's book is rich in detail, well documented with extensive numerical evidence, and very persuasive about the centrality of donativos in the politics of late-colonial Río de la Plata. It is an excellent book, highly recommended.

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Hans-Jurgen Prien, *Christianity in Latin America* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, revised and expanded, 2013), pp. xxii +670, €203.00, $282.00, hb.

The author of this book modestly presents his work as 'an introduction rather than a comprehensive account'. But despite the disclaimer, there is a visible effort to be comprehensive, in time if not in geographical or thematic coverage. The book begins at the beginning (conquest and importation/imposition of Christianity) and carries its story through to the late twentieth century. The first nine chapters address issues concerning Church, society and politics in the colonial period. This discussion includes background chapters on Spanish overseas expansion and on the development of the Catholic Church after Trent. The three concluding chapters (which take up almost half the text) bring the narrative to the present (or at least close). In these chapters, the author pays special attention to theological and political conflicts and their effects on the Church (positivism, nationalism, liberal-conservative disputes), to race

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