

AFRO-MEXICANS IN BOURBON MEXICO

Taxing Blackness: Free Afro-Mexican Tribute in Bourbon New Spain, by Norah L. A. Gharala. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 2019, Pp. 292. 54.95 cloth.
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This is the first book-length study of the institutional underpinnings, social reactions to, and repercussions of the imposition of royal tribute on free Afro-Mexicans in eighteenth-century New Spain. In six detailed chapters, the author presents the legal, political, and social facets of the tributary process, examining these sequentially, and over the eighteenth century. Broadly, the book invites attention to the histories of *calidad* and Afro-Mexicans.

Chapter 1 recounts the history of taxation in the Spanish world from medieval Iberia to its adaptations in the Indies. It also analyzes the emergence of socioeconomic categories related to tribute, such as *calidad*. Chapter 2 uses the cases of two regions in Puebla and San Luis Potosí to explore the various problems regarding tribute registration and collection during the early Bourbon period. Chapter 3 presents several cases in which people of African ancestry tried to gain tribute exemption or improve their tributary status, using a range of strategies.

Chapter 4 focuses on the period of the Bourbon reforms and tracks the colonial state's increasingly efficient methods of tributary registration and tribute collection in New Spain. Undoubtedly, the most remarkable finding of this section is the astonishing 121 percent increase in *mulato* tributaries between 1769 and 1788 (105). Chapter 5 convincingly argues against the era's mythic stereotypes surrounding *mulatos vagos*, or vagabond mulattos, lacking local social ties and bent on avoiding their tribute responsibilities. Finally, Chapter 6 scrutinizes the process by which individuals and families engaged with colonial institutions to try to remove themselves from the ever-expanding tributary records.

Three intertwined concepts provide the framework for this book: *calidad*, blackness, and tributary status. The concept of *calidad* has proven to be a useful tool in studying social differentiation in the Spanish world. Indeed, some of the best sections of this book (Chapter 6 in particular) are those in which the concept of *calidad* is used as a framework. *Calidad* is a historical concept used in the Spanish world to assign people a place in the social hierarchy, so as to distribute privileges and obligations. The term translates directly as 'quality,' but some historians prefer to translate it as rank or status. The *calidad* of a person was expressed in racial or ethnic terms such as Spaniard, black, or Indian, but in fact it overflowed these classifications, for it combined multiple perceptions of difference. It was also related to kin and reputation, and it was linked (and sometimes used interchangeably) with other differentiation notions, such as *condición*, *casta*, and *clase*. In short, one might say that *calidad* encapsulated what we now call race, class, ethnicity, and gender in one single concept.

From this book, scholars should pay closer attention to the ways that *casta*, *calidad*, and *clase*, all topics raised here, intersect, but are also different. We cannot conflate these in practice, because although closely related, they meant different things, and it is important to be precise about them. Otherwise, we risk reducing these, and other Latin American experiences, to processes more historically linked to US experiences. The scholarship on Afro-Mexicans, for its part, has depicted during the last decades a complex picture of the identities of *negros*, *mulatos*, *moriscos*, *lobos*, *chinos*, *pardos*, and *morenos* in New Spain. Gharala adds one more element to this multifaceted portrait: that of the tributary subject.

Despite these contributions, however, the author is at times imprecise in her approach to the colonial-era language of difference. There is also a lack of clarity in the use of blackness and tributary status. In turn, this blurs the book's conclusions. Furthermore, the author's claims about the inflexibility and unchangeable nature of social labels linked to blackness are puzzling and run counter to the findings of a number of other studies that engage social differentiation and Afro-Mexican identity during this period. Nonetheless, the author should be praised for debunking the stereotypes about the *mulatos vagos* and for reconstructing the history of Afro-Mexican communities.

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CASTE WAR

Violence and the Caste War of Yucatán. By Wolfgang Gabbert. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019. Pp. 342. \$120.00 cloth.
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Combining rigorous historical scholarship with theoretical insights from anthropology and sociology, Wolfgang Gabbert's latest monograph undoubtedly ranks, along with the works of Terry Rugeley and Don Dumond, among the most comprehensive and balanced treatments of Yucatán's Caste War. Unlike Rugeley and Dumond though, Gabbert is mainly concerned with examining the question of violence in the conflict, which although it seems to be of obvious importance has still not received exhaustive scholarly treatment. The Caste War has often been characterized as a race war between Indians and non-Indians. Gabbert, however, convincingly shows that the conflict was far more complex, defying any single categorization. Another important contribution is his effort to contextualize violence and identify patterns, motivations, and structural factors to explain seemingly irrational or chaotic acts of violence.

An outstanding feature of Gabbert's narrative is his handling of a wide range of sources to shed light on noncombatants, particularly in the buffer zones, and the role of lower classes