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of what might be observed on Indian reservations such as Gila River a century from now. If the history documented in this volume is any indication, and progress continues in a similar upward trajectory, it should prove an exciting and promising time indeed.

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**Indians and the Political Economy of Colonial Central America, 1670–1810.** By Robert W. Patch. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2013. 296 pages. \$36.95 cloth.

“Don’t judge a book by its cover,” George Eliot famously admonished. I am ashamed to admit that briefly, I did come to a premature judgment based on the cover of Robert Patch’s new book: the title seemed a little dull, and the cover illustration—an image from the Dresden Codex—seemed out of place. I am happy to say, however, that my opinion changed dramatically as soon as I began to read. Before long, it became apparent that this monograph has numerous qualities to recommend it. The following three struck me as particularly significant.

First, colonial Central America remains an understudied region of Latin America. Though this is less true for colonial highland Guatemala, which in the last couple of decades has emerged as a full-fledged multidisciplinary field in its own right, it is certainly true of the region from Honduras to Costa Rica. Part of this book’s importance, therefore, is its discussion of the Kingdom of Guatemala as a whole. Corresponding roughly to modern Central America, the Kingdom included Chiapas but excluded eastern Nicaragua and Panama, with provinces outside the Guatemalan highlands also offering detailed archival evidence. But the value of Patch’s attention to the whole Kingdom is not simply one of filling scholarly gaps. He also puts Central America more squarely on the map by showing how the industrial production of export goods integrated its provinces into the eighteenth-century global economy. Arguing that Latin America “was not simply a provider of raw materials” but “was one of the most industrialized parts of the world from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries,” he places the Central American provinces right in the middle of hemispheric, even global, developments (3).

Second, Patch engages the topic of the *repartimiento* in a smart and useful way. The *repartimiento de mercancías*, or *repartimiento de efectos*, was a kind of business arrangement between government officials and indigenous communities (Patch uses the term *Indian*). An official would extend Indians credit or cash that they would repay later in marketable goods, or, alternatively, would sell them goods on credit—thereby also putting Indians in debt. For many years, the conventional scholarly wisdom was that this practice was coercive and immoral, an example of colonialism’s corruption and exploitation. But then several scholars began to argue—most notably Jeremy Baskes in *Indians, Merchants, and Markets* (2000)—that this perspective too closely followed the rhetoric of Bourbon-era reformers, who sought to abolish the *repartimiento*. In

some regions (Baskes studied Oaxaca, for example) there was evidence that Indians voluntarily entered into *repartimiento* business, or at least some of this business was voluntary under some circumstances.

Complementing studies such as *Indians, Merchants, and Markets*, Patch's study of *repartimientos* in Central American provinces adds another layer of sophistication to our understanding of what he calls "the business of politics and the politics of business" (116). In chapters 4 and 5 in particular he brings a potentially dry topic to life by exploring the motives, fortunes, and misfortunes of three Spanish individuals engaged in this business: two were partners in highland Guatemala, an *alcalde* (mayor) and a local merchant, and one was a governor of Nicaragua. I found these two chapters to be thoroughly illuminating and enjoyable, partly for how the cases studies serve to explain why and how the *repartimiento* existed, and partly for how well Patch avoids passing moral judgment. On the one hand, these three sample Spaniards are not caricatured as evil men because they exploited Indians; on the other hand, neither is the book an apology for the *repartimiento* or Spanish colonialism. Rather, it presents a complex, contradictory, human story, in which flawed individuals behave in recognizable ways.

Thus, we are led in this book neither to like nor to despise the Spanish officials who used these lopsided business deals to make a living. Instead, Patch persuades us that "only a few of the magistrates would probably qualify as excessively greedy," and that for these administrators the *repartimiento* was "not corruption. It was justice" (114). When Patch details how much it cost a Spanish official to hold office in Central America, the reader is almost able to see such officials themselves as victims of crown demands and the larger colonial system. At the very least, the magistrates' motives and actions are comprehensible: colonial bureaucrats were "real, flesh-and-blood people who behaved as they did because of their culture and the system in which they had to operate" (67–68).

This is not to say the Patch does not allow sympathy for Indians under colonial rule to creep into his writing. As he observes many times in various ways, this supposedly lazy but actually overburdened and hardworking Indian population carried the weight of the region's twenty provinces on their backs. The whole of colonial society and its bureaucracy "was based on the Indians, the sine qua non of the Kingdom of Guatemala" (78). And the book's resonant and well-crafted final line testifies: "The Spanish conclusion that the Indians were lazy, therefore, is proof positive of indigenous resistance to the *repartimiento* in particular and to colonialism in general" (220). In other words, Patch seeks to walk a fine line between judging and defending the system, with his goal to explicate and illuminate, rather than denounce and condemn. He succeeds resoundingly.

The third striking quality of the book is its scholarship. Patch has a well-earned reputation for producing tightly argued scholarship based on flawlessly reliable, consistent, and comprehensive archival research. Any scholar or student pursuing an archival lead in one of Patch's articles or his two excellent previous monographs—*Maya and Spaniard in Yucatan* (1993) and *Maya Revolt and Revolution in the Eighteenth Century* (2002)—will find that Patch has provided accurate citations and solid readings. This

new book is very much in the same vein. It is built on a bedrock of hundreds of documents, found mostly in the *Archivo General de Indias* (the imperial archives in Seville), and the *Archivo Histórico Nacional* in Madrid. The way that Patch cooks these ingredients—that is, how he takes documents such as the 1790 investigation into the activities of Brigadier José de Estachería as Governor of Nicaragua—and serves them up transformed into transparent data and clear prose, is a master class in the methodology of empiricist historical writing. Patch is a top chef, and this book is a most satisfying dish.

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**Indigenous Encounters with Neoliberalism: Place, Women, and the Environment in Canada and Mexico.** By Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014. 284 pages. \$37.95 paper; \$99.00 electronic.

Indigenous cultures around the world have experienced drastic and traumatic changes due to contact with other populations, most notably those of European descent, and are continuing to cope with those changes in our modern world. Isabel Altamirano-Jiménez rightly places this in the context of neoliberalism, focusing on a modernistic movement that is evident not only at a multinational level, but also in the choices made by local governments, including those of indigenous heritage. There is a great deal of pressure on indigenous governments to participate in the modern neoliberal world. To become partners at the negotiating table and to protect their rights, in such areas as business, ecology, and gender indigenous peoples are pressed toward outcomes that are recognizable from an outside perspective. As Altamirano-Jiménez well documents, in order to participate at this level—to have a say in geographic locations that are central to their cultural point of view, including ceremonial activities, subsistence processes, and maintenance of their cultures' integrity—at times many indigenous populations have chosen to work in what appears to be a mindset similar to that of neoliberal governments.

In anthropological terms, the book takes a holistic view: a landscape approach that considers how individuals and governments interact in a connected environment, one that the people who are moving through its specific temporal and physical location recognize is important. The author weaves together rich descriptions, gathered from ethnographic interviews of indigenous individuals, with Canadian and Mexican indigenous governments' political decisions, as well as those of neoliberal national governments. While this approach is not new to social science, because indigenous cultures are predicated on intimate knowledge of a specific place through time, the landscape approach is essential in any discussion of these cultures. At the individual level, layers of knowledge are blended together by indigenous governments in order to form a more complete understanding of how their people view the world. This is a long-term process. As argued by Altamirano-Jiménez, this perspective is reminiscent