

A Companion to Viceregal Mexico City, 1519–1821. John F. Lopez, ed.
 Brill's Companions to the Americas 3. Leiden: Brill, 2021. xviii + 504 pp. \$280.

“Not a city but a world” was how Fernando de Herrera described Seville in the sixteenth century. The same could be said for Mexico City throughout the colonial period. In the sixteenth century, Mexico City was already home to large numbers of Africans and Afro-descendants, Asians, Indigenous Americans, Europeans, and Mestizos. The story of how the early modern world forged new global connections and new kinds of institutions that helped produce new forms of colonial capitalism, new articulations of state and empire, new intercultural relations and social bonds, and new regimes of inequality and resistance, can be told through the history of Mexico City in the colonial era. Many of the nineteen chapters in this edited volume make important contributions to our understanding of colonial-era Mexico City and demonstrate the importance of zooming in on this city’s history for broadening our understandings of the dynamics of imperialism and change in the early modern period.

Matthew Restell begins part 1, “History and Society,” with a reflection on how the multi-stage reimagining of cities was part of the process of colonization: at first, pre-invasion Indigenous cities were represented as places of gory sacrifice; then, colonial cities were imagined as spaces empty of the Indigenous people who had built them. Luis Fernando Granados continues this theme, observing that colonialism invented a false dichotomy between cities and Indigenous people in order to create a distinction between people in civilized and natural states.

Many of the chapters draw attention to the diverse population of colonial Mexico City, as well as intercultural exchanges and transcendence of the ethnic categories that were often employed as tools of empire. Joan C. Bristol draws attention to the fact that Afro-Mexicans constituted the majority of the population of colonial-era Mexico City, yet the history of Blacks and Mulattos was largely ignored until the mid-twentieth century. Bristol addresses this historical erasure by focusing on the active contributions of these groups to urban religious life. Sonya Lipsett-Rivera brings gender into focus and calls for a more diverse understanding of what constituted family units in colonial Mexico City. She explains how colonialism could reinforce gender norms, but that there were also gender deviants: for example, those known as “flashy transvestites” (102).

Part 2, “On Religious Life,” helps explain the relationship between religious and secular landscapes in colonial Mexico City. Antonio Rubial García emphasizes the significance of religious institutions, noting that they “owned half of all real estate in the capital” (137), and that colonial cities could not have been built without religious institutions (138). He explains that the lines between religious and secular capital were also blurred. Alejandro Cañeque focuses on the *cabildo* (city council) of Mexico City, its constitutional significance, and the way religious and political lines were blurred through the role of the patron saints. Cristina Cruz González explains how

confraternities and their visual and performative cultures helped create corporate identity in Mexico City.

Part 3, “Institutions,” offers insights into the mechanics of empire. Iván Escamilla González explores the similarities and differences between viceregal courts of Mexico City and the courts of the Old World. María del Pilar Martínez López-Cano offers a mapping of financial institutions and sources of credit from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries, as well as the implications of the transition to independence. Enrique González González and Paula S. De Vos each offer important insights into institutions of education and medicine, with De Vos drawing attention to the significance of the legacy of the medieval constitutional tradition.

Part 4, “Special Themes,” contributes to our understanding of environmental change and responses to it in the colonial period. Barbara Mundy focuses on the Indigenous foundations of the city, offering insights into the Indigenous representations of political authority and control of water in Mexico City contained in the Codex Mendoza and *plano parcial de la ciudad de Mexico*. Like Restell and Fernando Granados, Mundy draws attention to the way the Tenochtitlan included urban and aquatic spaces and had systems of urban growing (the *chinampas*) which frustrated the European concept of a city. John F. López examines the *desagüe*, an engineering project that tried to end flooding by draining the lakes surrounding the city in response to flooding from 1607, which he argues constituted an “epistemological break by the Spanish from Aztec methods for mitigating environmental disaster” (330). This focus on environment signposts important new directions in the early modern histories of empire. Part 5, “The Arts,” offers a range of case studies that offer snapshots of the cultural life of Mexico City.

Many of the chapters speak to recurring themes including cosmopolitanism, constitutionalism, and corporate identities. They speak of lines blurred between ethnicities, classes, and secular and religious spheres. The volume would have benefited from a conclusion or epilogue to reflect on these emerging themes and their implications, especially since the introduction misses an opportunity to evaluate these and offer an over-arching framing.

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A Dissimulated Trade: Northern European Timber Merchants in Seville (1574–1598). Germán Jiménez-Montes.

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In *A Dissimulated Trade*, Germán Jiménez-Montes interweaves economic, political, and material history to reassess the role of Northern European merchants, *flamencos*, in the late sixteenth-century Spanish timber trade. The book draws primarily upon notarial documents from the *Archivo Histórico Provincial de Sevilla*, as well as material from