

Finally, it is not an exaggeration to say that this is a fundamental book, not only for anyone who wants a comprehensive view of Peruvian economic history but also for specialists looking for new approaches and research agendas.

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## **Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert, *The Three Deaths of Cerro de San Pedro: Four Centuries of Extractivism in a Small Mexican Mining Town***

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From the 1990s onwards, high-intensity and capital-driven forms of resource extraction have been reverberating throughout Latin America. As a result, extractive frontiers within the region have expanded, rapidly producing unrepairable environmental damage, causing enormous biodiversity losses and dismantling traditional ways of life and economies at the local level, leading to extensive human-rights violations and generating numerous episodes of social and political contention over extractivism.

Although mining shares an important portion of the extractivist landscape in Latin America with hydrocarbon and other sectors, its relevance for the region is paramount. Starting in the 1990s, Latin America's importance in terms of metal production worldwide increased significantly, with the region playing a dominant role in international gold and silver mining as well as copper mining. Along with other Latin American countries such as Chile and Peru, Mexico has one of the highest rates of mining exploration in the world.

Despite extractivism's recent and widespread expansion, it is not new to the region. It has historically been the development model in Latin America and the Caribbean since the colonial period. Although its role in the economic development of the region is well known, few attempts have been made at tracing its long-term history. And yet, when we adopt a historical perspective and look back in time with the right tools, we can identify processes that have been exerting an influence on past and current events, and come to appreciate the value of understanding the cycles of history to deal with the future.

Drawing on an impressive array of primary sources, – including various archives, official documents, reports kept in several Mexican and US collections, local newspapers and, for the period beginning in the 1940s, a series of oral history interviews with residents of Cerro de San Pedro, as well as the very rich historiography produced at local universities – Daviken Studnicki-Gizbert's book offers a comprehensive study of the history of Cerro de San Pedro from colonial to present times.

*The Three Deaths of Cerro de San Pedro: Four Centuries of Extractivism in a Small Mexican Mining Town* is a fascinating, nicely crafted and thoroughly researched account of a small but historically relevant mining site in Mexico and an outstanding example of the cyclical history of extractivism in Latin America.

The historical, long-view perspective adopted by the author is clearly one of the strengths of this book. By following the entire course of the more than 400-year history of mining at Cerro de San Pedro, the author is able to bring to light an unexpected pattern of recurring cycles of mining boom and bust.

In the sixteenth century, Cerro de San Pedro was one of the first colonial mines opened by the conquistadores. Founded on a colonial bonanza in 1592, for more than 40 years the town experienced growth, but saw a steady decline in gold and silver production from the early seventeenth century onwards until its demise one hundred years later. In the late nineteenth century, large-scale mining in Cerro de San Pedro would bloom again. Under Porfirio Díaz's administration, the town would become Mexico's first industrial gold- and silver-mining and smelting complex, but by the mid-twentieth century, due to post-revolutionary labour-related demands, the mines were shut down by the mining company (which allegedly set them on fire as a means of getting out of settling with its workers), giving way to Cerro de San Pedro's second 'death'. After decades of abandonment, Cerro de San Pedro witnessed yet another resurgence in the 1990s. This third extractivist cycle in the history of the town ran from 1995 to 2018. It was embedded in neo-extractivism – a renewed ideological and political commitment to resource extraction based on a practical cost-effective but highly destructive and economically incompatible mining technique known as open-pit mining. This led to one of the earliest cases in recent times of contention over extractivism in Latin America.

How recurrent extractivist cycles of a non-renewable resource like a metal are possible is the intriguing puzzle at the core of the book. The author's response to this puzzle is to be found in the capitalist forms of resource extraction that account for both the mining booms and busts throughout the history of this small Mexican mining town. However, by revealing the underlying logic beneath the deaths and revivals of Cerro de San Pedro, Studnicki-Gizbert's book also tells the broader story of the waves of extractivism in Latin America and the extractivist capitalism that makes them possible.

Four themes are woven into the broad history of extractivism and the local history of Cerro de San Pedro: (i) the cyclical dynamics of capital in the long-term history of mining; (ii) the concept of social metabolism as a heuristic link between the work of extraction and the social and ecological consequences it produces; (iii) the concept of a moral ecology as a framework to understand popular struggles for environmental justice in the extractive zones; and (iv) the history of extractivism as a foundational and persistent regime of resource governance.

The book makes several central and highly significant arguments. The first has to do with the origins of extractivism and the extractivist state, which are to be found in the exceptional circumstances of the conquest and colonisation of the Americas by the Spanish Crown. The second argument made by the author is that extractivism is best understood as an assemblage, i.e. a grouping of elements in different fields of social life that mutually reinforce each other. Finally, the author

argues that political, material, ecological, social and fiscal crises have played an important role in the process of assembling extractivism.

This is an important book that significantly contributes to our understanding of the foundations for high-intensity and capital-driven forms of resource extraction that are dominant in Latin America today. It is also a great example of the importance of adopting a long-term perspective for our understanding of the present in order to hopefully steer our future more effectively. I very much enjoyed reading it and I strongly recommend it.

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## **Peter Blanchard, *Fearful Vassals: Urban Elite Loyalty in the Viceroyalty of Río de la Plata, 1776–1810***

**University of Pittsburgh Press, 2020, pp. ix + 285**

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When trying to explain the origins of the crisis of Spanish rule in the Americas, two big-bang theories collide. Led by John Lynch, one of them found that dissent in the Spanish colonies increasingly expanded since the Spanish Bourbon kings introduced administrative, economic, military and religious reforms in the second half of the eighteenth century.

Since the Bourbon Reforms discriminated against the Creoles purely on the basis of their place of birth, discrimination was followed by discontent, which transformed into hostility and resulted in a separate identity for American-born Creoles. Eventually, all these feelings were directed at the Spaniards in the colonies and then at the Spanish rule itself. Reforms were successful in their results but fed anger, resistance and even rebellion.

The Bourbon Reforms' theory fitted perfectly into the official narratives of each of the Spanish American nations, which stated that the process of independence had started in 1810 as a result of the maturity of a Creole identity. Nevertheless, in the atmosphere of a renewed historiographical discussion promoted by the bicentennial of the French Revolution, François-Xavier Guerra revisited Lynch's thesis.

Guerra, who was writing about the crisis of the Spanish regime while the Soviet Union was collapsing, found that although both crises were preceded by reforms, their real impact in the Spanish world was not significant. Guerra stated that what triggered the end of the Spanish rule was not an internal reform but an external aggression. The invasion of the French troops in 1808 and the immediate abdication of the Spanish monarchs created a set of different reactions: first in Europe and then in the Americas and ultimately led to the birth of new nations in the two