

SILVER, SLAVES, AND SUGAR:
The Persistence of Spanish Colonialism from
Absolutism to Liberalism

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SILVER, TRADE, AND WAR: SPAIN AND AMERICA IN THE MAKING OF EARLY MODERN EUROPE. By Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein. (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000. Pp. 351. \$49.95 cloth.)

BLACK SOCIETY IN SPANISH FLORIDA. By Jane Landers. Foreword by Peter H. Wood. (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1999. Pp. 390. \$50.00 cloth, \$19.95 paper.)

LOS MARQUESES DE COMILLAS, 1817–1925: ANTONIO Y CLAUDIO LOPEZ. By Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla. Prologue by Josep María Delgado Ribas. (Madrid: LID Editorial Empresarial, 2000. Pp. 405. N.p.)

GOBERNAR COLONIAS. By Josep M. Fradera. (Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 1999. Pp. 152. N.p.)

ESPAÑA EN LA CRISIS DE 1898: DE LA GRAN DEPRESIÓN A LA MODERNIZACIÓN ECONÓMICA DEL SIGLO XX. By Jordi Maluquer de Motes. (Barcelona: Ediciones Península, 1999. Pp. 233. N.p.)

Change in the nature of Spanish colonial exploitation in the Americas came slowly. When it did, the Spanish court and bureaucracy generally found themselves in a reactive position. Such was especially true in the early modern period. Foreign merchants, pirates, bankers, and armies chipped away at Spanish sovereignty, not only in the Caribbean and other parts of the Americas, but perhaps most effectively in the metropolis itself. Over the course of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the Seville-Cádiz trading complex found itself riddled with foreign interests that systematically drained American resources away from Spain and to its rivals, particularly England and France. While those countries developed dynamic economies and strong centralized states, Spain and its dominant classes suffered from a rentier mentality and a weak “absolutist” monarchy unable to exercise its putative authority to reform the obviously corrupt colonial system. Not even the

change of dynasties, from Hapsburg to Bourbon, brought effective relief in the short-term. At least through the mid-eighteenth century, Spain was still little more than an *entrepôt* for the Northern European economies and a puppet in the Anglo-French military and commercial rivalry that dominated the Atlantic world. In contrast to England and France whose monarchies made pacts with commercial bourgeoisies, Spain remained resolutely backward-looking. The Bourbons inherited a country characterized by “a patrimonial polity, a Castilian agricultural and ranching economy of large landed estates and impoverished peasantry, [and] a system of cultural beliefs attuned to an already defunct concept of Catholic universality.”¹

This depiction of Spain as a weak and semi-developed metropolis will be familiar to students of Latin American and Spanish history. Its most trenchant formulation is Stanley Stein and Barbara Stein’s *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America*.² The Steins’ new study, *Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe*, is a densely argued elaboration of some of that book’s theses. This first installation of a multi-volume work concentrates on metropolitan political and economic structures and Spain’s clashes with foreign rivals. The authors survey and comment on the complex historiography of Spain’s rise and fall in the Atlantic world and Western Europe. This work is also deeply grounded in archival research (primarily in Spanish and French archives but also Mexican and U.S.) that allows ample insight into the functioning of the Spanish court and colonial bureaucracy.

The weakness of the Spanish monarchy was evident from the founding days of the American empire. The monarchy ceded the responsibility of economic expansion in Europe and the Americas in the form of monopolies granted to regionally located merchant groups. In the case of the Castilian wool trade with Bruges, Burgos came to dominate to the exclusion of rival cities such as Bilbao, while Seville merchants controlled the American silver trade and the quasi-public institutions, like the Casa de Contratación and Consejo de Indias, that regulated it. These sixteenth-century precedents would have harmful consequences for the monarchy’s finances and for the country’s economic development. On the one hand, tremendous economic and regulatory power was privatized (as it would continue to be well into the eighteenth century), opening the way for fraud and the hemorrhage of bullion. On the other, local interests had no capacity or concern for a broader national

1. Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein, *Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 262.

2. Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein, *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973).

economic policy. These problems would persist throughout the Hapsburg and the early Bourbon dynasties. In contrast, England and France had more centralized and interventionist monarchies that laid the foundations for military might and vibrant national economies.³ Spain, despite a significant period of hegemony in Europe and the Atlantic world, eventually found itself weakened by its emphasis on mining in the colonial economy and by its reliance on monopolistic interests, infiltrated by foreign merchant communities with special prerogatives, in the management of colonial and European trade. By the end of the seventeenth century, it was no longer the master of its own fate:

Spain's fragmented Hapsburg administration served a fragmented state where vested interests formed a bloc of consensus maintaining what had become a mutually profitable equilibrium: in other words, the status quo. Over time, the dispersion of silver had unpredicted consequences in Spain's double dependence: on Europe for much of what it consumed and reexported to America and on the colonies for the silver to pay European suppliers and cover state expenditures. (56)

The War of Spanish Succession was an explicit demonstration of this dependency. While the French Bourbon dynasty eventually won the throne, England was perhaps the big winner because it secured the *asiento*, a contract to supply the colonies with slaves that also served as a cover for a massive contraband trade, as well as other special trading privileges. The new dynasty sought to undo the "pseudo-absolutism" (103) of the Hapsburgs and to build an effective mercantilist system based on the French model. Indeed, many historians of early modern Spain and colonial Latin America see the shift from Hapsburg to Bourbon as decisive. The Steins, however, characterize the early decades of the Bourbon monarchy as a time of ambitions that shattered against the "granite-like outcrops of the Hapsburg legacy" (259). While *projectistas* endlessly diagnosed the ills of the colonial economy, such as the contraband trade carried on by foreign merchants, the effective power of vested interests like the Cádiz trading complex, as well as the devastating effects of war against militarily superior states, made reform slow at best. The Steins carefully explore the works, most of them unpublished manuscripts, of numerous Bourbon *projectistas*, such as José del

3. The classic discussion of the Spanish monarchy's weakness, especially in its confrontations with France in the seventeenth century, is J. H. Elliott, *Imperial Spain, 1469–1714* (New York: New American Library, 1963). Idem., *Richelieu and Olivares* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984). Robin Blackburn characterizes the political economy of early modern England and France in similar fashion, though with a concentration on the state's partnership with the commercial bourgeoisie in developing colonial slavery rather than controlling bullion flows. See *The Making of New World Slavery, 1492–1800: From the Baroque to the Modern* (London: Verso, 1997).

Campillo y Cosío and the Marqués de la Ensenada. Though they find a general hesitancy to challenge the most entrenched interests in eighteenth-century Spain, especially those associated with American silver and the *flota*, they nonetheless see a patriotic desire to strengthen the Spanish economy and military so that the new monarchy could more effectively compete with England and France. Imitating the English and French development of Caribbean sugar and slavery in places like Cuba and Venezuela and the construction of more warships were among the innovations that fell flat. The Steins find that by the middle of the eighteenth century, the works of the *proyectistas* “mirrored a sense of disillusionment, of inferiority, of lost opportunity, of Spain’s social inability to meet the challenge of the west Europe’s competitive nation-states” (231). Despite the new monarchy, “the burden of the Hapsburg legacy had reasserted itself” (232).

One eagerly anticipates subsequent volumes, suspecting that some sort of change and significant reform eventually took place in the Spanish colonial system. How the authors evaluate that change in light of their convincing discussion of the weight of the Hapsburg legacy, both in Europe and the Americas, will influence scholars in a number of fields in early modern Spanish and colonial Latin American history. The history of slavery in the Spanish-speaking Caribbean is one such field because the Bourbon monarchy did eventually succeed in emulating England and France by creating the conditions for the take-off of sugar and the slavery in Cuba in the later eighteenth century and Puerto Rico in the early nineteenth. Indeed, many scholars of Cuba point to the nature of the Bourbon reforms in explaining why Cuba remained a Spanish colony when most of Spanish America achieved independence in the nineteenth century. Slavery and the slave trade were important factors that sealed the pact between Cuban creoles and the Spanish crown but so too were the military reforms undertaken after the British occupation of Havana (1762–63) that, at least in the short run, gave Cubans of different classes and colors a vested interest in the Spanish military.⁴

Unlike Peru and Mexico where Indians provided the core of the labor force, the Caribbean colonies relied on African slavery, though the transition to plantation labor—the magnet for the slave trade to other New World colonies like Brazil, Barbados, Jamaica, and St. Domingue—

4. On the Cuban slave complex, the fundamental work is Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *El Ingenio*, 3 vols. (Havana: Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1978). See also Dale Tomich, “World Slavery and Caribbean Capitalism: The Cuban Sugar Industry, 1760–1868,” *Theory and Society* 20 (1991): 297–319. On the impact of military reforms, see Allan J. Kuethe, *Cuba, 1753–1815: Crown, Military, and Society* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1986); and Sherry Johnson, *The Social Transformation of Eighteenth-Century Cuba* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2001).

was relatively late in coming. Nonetheless, as in other parts of Spanish America, African slaves provided a crucial labor source for the conquerors in various branches of the economy. Thus, while Cuba and Puerto Rico had always employed slave labor, the nature of slavery there changed dramatically in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

In his recent survey of slavery in colonial North America, Ira Berlin offers insights about changes in American slavery that extends to other Atlantic societies.⁵ Berlin emphasizes the hybrid identities forged in the early days of the Atlantic slave trade. Until the mid- to late seventeenth century, most slaves in colonial North America were what he calls “Atlantic creoles.” That is to say, they hailed from the African littoral or even from Europe—for instance, southern Spain or Portugal—and European Atlantic colonies like São Tomé. They were fully conversant with the culture of the enslavers, speaking European languages, in many cases practicing Christianity, and familiar with European laws and business practices. Thus, many slaves in early colonial North America shared a common culture with the master class that made it easier for them to achieve freedom from slavery. Their business and language skills facilitated their economic success and allowed many of them to save enough money to purchase their freedom or that of loved ones. “Atlantic creole” is thus a term that refers not only to the enslaved around the Atlantic rim but also to the thriving class of free Africans and African-Americans.

According to Berlin, however, the space for an Atlantic creole culture in colonial North America contracted sharply over the course of the seventeenth century as many of the colonies made the transition from “societies with slaves” to “slave societies.”⁶ Mixed economies characterized the former and slavery figured marginally. While the master-slave relation was still harsh, there did exist more space for freedom and autonomy because enslaved labor was not absolutely central to the economy or social status. Under these conditions, Atlantic creoles made up the majority of slaves in colonial North America because of the relatively low demand for slave labor.

However, by the end of the seventeenth century, most of the colonies became slave societies in which slavery was the central form of labor and the master-slave relation ramified through every aspect of social life. The key to this transition was the development of an export crop that was labor intensive, such as tobacco in the Chesapeake or rice

5. Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998), 1–92.

6. Berlin borrows this distinction from the ancient historians Keith Hopkins and Moses Finley.

in the Carolinas. The demand for slavery grew with the volume of exports. As the slave trade intensified, the distance between master and slave, white and black, widened. Planters sought to extract more labor from their workers, and colonial legislatures aggressively limited the rights of both slaves and free blacks. Moreover, slaves came increasingly from the African interior rather than the littoral and thus had no exposure to Atlantic culture. African, as opposed to Atlantic creole, slaves, thus found themselves in a more desperate situation. Not only did they suffer from more intense labor discipline and social control, but they were also isolated in a foreign land and subjected to foreign languages, religions, and customs.⁷

I make this digression on Berlin's work because it offers food for thought for the study of Latin American slavery. The idea of "Atlantic creoles" suggests that the line between slavery in colonial Latin America and colonial British America, at least in certain moments, was not as rigid as some of the foundational works in the study of slavery once suggested.⁸ For instance, there appears to have been a considerable exchange and borrowing of ideas, techniques, and people across imperial lines in the early construction of American slave regimes.⁹ Moreover, Berlin's close study of the transition from societies with slaves to slave societies calls attention to the flexible nature of slavery and how it changed over time in relationship to a constellation of economic, cultural, and social forces. Such an emphasis is especially appropriate to the study of slavery in the Spanish Caribbean where the development of the export crop par excellence (sugar) radically transformed the nature of bonded labor.

Jane Landers' work, *Black Society in Spanish Florida*, is a detailed study of a society with slaves on the verge of major changes. In her introduction, Landers cites both Berlin and Frank Tannenbaum as she conceptualizes the dynamics of slavery in a Spanish frontier society.¹⁰ On the

7. Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone*, 1–14. See also Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth-Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998).

8. For instance, Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen, the Negro in the Americas* (New York: Vintage, 1946).

9. See Blackburn, *The Making of New World Slavery*; and Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624–1713*, foreword by Gary Nash (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

10. Though Landers refers to Tannenbaum in her book's introduction, she never returns to consider his thesis in light of her findings and argument. Given the many years of harsh criticism of Tannenbaum by historians of Latin American slavery, further reflection would have been welcome. For a more sustained and vigorous reconsideration of Tannenbaum's characterization of Latin American slavery, see María Elena Díaz, *The Virgin, the King, and the Royal Slaves of El Cobre: Negotiating Freedom in Colonial Cuba, 1670–1780* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2000). Responses to Tannenbaum

one hand, she calls attention to the surprising cosmopolitanism of what was at first glance a colonial backwater. Indeed, the very nature of the colony's relative underdevelopment facilitated the growth of a slave population composed of Atlantic creoles:

Africans in Florida lived not in cotton rows or tobacco patches but in a more complex and international world that linked the Caribbean, Africa, the various competing European powers in North America, and a still vast and powerful, not to mention diverse, Indian hinterland. (4)

On the other, Landers affirms the Tannenbaum thesis by arguing that slavery in the Iberian societies allowed slaves greater rights and avenues to freedom than was the case in the British colonies: "acknowledgement of a slave's humanity and rights and a liberal manumission policy eased the transition from slave to citizen and allowed the formation of a significant free black society throughout the Spanish world" (2). Such was especially true in a frontier society like Florida where the clash of imperial rivals in the eighteenth century gave slaves leverage in their negotiations with masters and the colonial regime.

Landers' discussion begins with the early Spanish exploration and colonization of Florida in the sixteenth century, but the real focus of the book is the mid- to late eighteenth century. The book's archival foundation is impressive, drawing on research in Spain, Cuba, Mexico, and principally the East Florida Papers held in the P.K. Yonge Collection at the University of Florida in Gainesville. Archaeological studies of Spanish Florida also provide important data.

The defining feature of this society with slaves was its proximity to slave societies, the Carolinas and Georgia. The shared border with first British and then U.S. planters, as well as Florida's place in the geopolitics of the Caribbean, endowed slaves and free blacks with unique rights and expectations. To destabilize its northern rival, Spain made Florida into a sanctuary for runaway slaves, first from the Carolinas and then Georgia. Not only did the promise of freedom create unrest in those slave societies, but it also fostered a tremendous sense of loyalty to the Spanish crown among the colony's black population. Black militias stoutly resisted British invasions of Florida at mid-century: "Their military service had earned them freedom, homesteads, titles, and salaries.

by scholars of Latin American and Caribbean slavery have generally been highly critical. The Steins are among those critics. See *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America*. An especially nuanced critique of Tannenbaum, and of Stanley Elkins' work *Slavery*, is offered by Sidney Mintz in "Slavery and Emergent Capitalism" in *Slavery in the New World: A Reader in Comparative History* edited by Laura Foner and Eugene D. Genovese (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1969), 27–37. For critical perspectives on the "paternalism" of Brazilian slavery, see Stuart Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery* (Urbana and Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1992).

They clearly identified their interests with those of Spain" (59). Black troops defended their escape from slavery and their hard-won rights in Spanish Florida, embodied in the town of free blacks, Gracia Real de Santa María de Mose, founded in 1738 two miles north of St. Augustine, the Spanish capital. With defeat by the British came a temporary evacuation to Cuba for the colony, including slaves and free people of color who chose the uncertainty of dislocation to the certainty of enslavement under the British.¹¹

Landers dedicates the core of her book to reconstructing the life opportunities of slaves and free blacks in Florida. To populate this vulnerable colony, the Spanish regime was liberal in granting homesteads. Slaves and free people held a number of occupations in Spanish Florida. They worked as barbers, musicians, fishermen, day laborers, and militiamen. Black women in Spanish Florida enjoyed significant rights under Spanish law. Through the East Florida Papers, Landers is able to identify several slave women who pursued the right of *coartación* or took their owners to court to prove that they were unjustly enslaved (140–44). Not all of these women won their cases but in Landers' judgment their very recourse to the courts and the vigor with which they defended their positions demonstrates that Spanish Florida was indeed a society with slaves that not only permitted numerous roads to freedom but also respected the legal rights of the enslaved. These examples also confirm that Spanish Florida was a society of Atlantic creoles, of slaves and free people who were conversant with the institutions of colonialism and who worked hard to use them to their benefit.

Slavery changed with the relinquishing of Spanish sovereignty in Florida. The English occupation between (1763–84) saw a hardening of racial and class lines. The slave trade increased in volume as planters turned towards plantation agriculture. More Africans were introduced into Florida during this period. The U.S. annexation of Florida in the nineteenth century, however, was an even more decisive turning point. Southerners from slave societies like Georgia sought to convert Florida to the plantation system and to introduce a clear segregation between black and white. Many blacks resisted the North American filibusters and left Florida once again for Cuba. Those who remained were eventually squeezed out by hostile white planters who were intolerant of the rights and prerogatives that blacks had won under Spanish rule.

Landers ends her study on that somber note. Florida was becoming a slave society fully incorporated into the racist culture of the antebellum

11. See also Díaz, *The Virgin, the King, and the Royal Slaves of El Cobre* for a discussion of the pueblo El Cobre in Cuba, also populated by slaves and free blacks who defended their unusual rights and prerogatives by emphasizing their military service to the monarchy.

south. She quite consciously characterizes Spanish Florida as a lost chapter in Florida's history of race relations, a time when blacks and whites achieved a greater degree of compromise and tolerance, one might even say *convivencia*. Her short Afterword thus raises the possibility that Spanish Florida offers contemporary Florida the example of a usable past:

Assisted by the corporate nature of Spanish society and Spain's medieval tradition of integration and assimilation, and by the almost constant threat to Spanish sovereignty in Florida, multiple generations of Africans leveraged linguistic, military, diplomatic, and artisanal skills into citizenship and property rights. Although other Africans and their descendants remained enslaved, they enjoyed more legal and social protection in this Spanish colony than they would again until almost two hundred years of Anglo history had passed in Florida. (249–50)

The works by the Steins and Landers throw light on very different parts of the Spanish empire. The Steins concentrate on the core of the imperial economy, the Mexican and Peruvian silver mines and their interface with the Seville-Cádiz trading complex, while Landers explores one of the edges of empire, a defensive buffer created to protect more valued colonies. The social and economic space of Spain's American empire was far from homogenous. The same is true of African slavery which changed dramatically over the time and space of Spanish rule in the Americas. Landers gestures towards the Tannenbaum thesis in the introduction of *Black Society in Spanish Florida* and notes throughout her study that Spanish law and religion, as well as Florida's peculiar setting, permitted slaves and free people of color a greater degree of autonomy and rights than one would expect, for instance, in the Chesapeake or Barbados. According to Tannenbaum, English slave laws and social customs failed to recognize the basic humanity of the enslaved. The English tended to treat their slaves as dehumanized factors of production rather than as members of a common legal and religious community (no matter how subordinate) as in the Iberian empires.¹² Landers validates that division by ending her book with reference to Florida's transition to full-blown plantation agriculture and social relations once incorporated into the United States. The contrast with Spanish Florida is sharply drawn.

Yet, regarding the treatment of slaves one could draw a similarly sharp contrast between Spanish Florida and another Spanish colony, Cuba, especially from the late eighteenth century onward. Indeed, by the time the United States occupied Florida in the early nineteenth century, Cuba was well on its way to becoming one of the Atlantic world's major slave societies. This history is well known. Responding to shifts

12. See Frank Tannenbaum, *Slave and Citizen: The Negro in the Americas* (New York: Vintage, 1946).

in the geopolitics of empire and of Caribbean slavery, creole and Spanish planters in Cuba were able to negotiate with the Crown to win important economic and military concessions. Among these was the liberalization of the slave trade which fed the largest plantation economy in Spanish American history.¹³ The take-off of the sugar plantation produced a dramatic transformation in the nature of Cuban slavery and race relations. Labor on the sugar plantation was notoriously brutal and deadly, while the colonial state and Cuban elites acted throughout the century to limit the rights of even free blacks. Moreover, acts of tremendous violence against slaves and free people of color perpetrated by the colonial state, as in the repression of the failed Conspiracy of La Escalera, punctuated the nineteenth century.¹⁴

The slave trade, plantation slavery, and sugar production continued to grow in the nineteenth century in the aftermath of the Spanish American revolutions, by which time Spain retained only Cuba and Puerto Rico in the Americas and the Philippines in the Pacific. Cuban sugar and slavery supplanted Andean and Mexican silver as the core of Spain's colonial economy in the nineteenth century. Moreover, regional participation in the colonial order expanded even as the size of the empire contracted. As the Steins demonstrate in their study, first Seville and then Cádiz merchants were successful in maintaining commercial monopolies well into the Bourbon period. Even strong critics of the colonial economy were unwilling to attack those vested interests head on. In the nineteenth century, in contrast, all of the regions of Spain traded actively with the Caribbean colonies. Spanish shipping was protected against competition from foreigners, but within Spain no one region enjoyed special prerogatives

13. In addition to the works cited in n. 4, see Franklin Knight, *Slave Society in Nineteenth-Century Cuba* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1970); David Murray, *Odious Commerce: Britain, Spain and the Abolition of the Cuban Slave Trade* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1980); Rebecca J. Scott, *Slave Emancipation in Cuba: The Transition to Free Labor, 1865–1899* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985); and Laird Bergad, *Cuban Rural Society in the Nineteenth Century: The Social and Economic History of Monoculture in Matanzas* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

14. Díaz makes interesting observations regarding the changes in slavery over the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. See the "Epilogue" in *The Virgin, the King, and the Royal Slaves of El Cobre*. More generally on Cuban slave society in the shadow of the plantation, see Robert L. Paquette, *Sugar Is Made with Blood: The Conspiracy of La Escalera and the Conflict between Empires over Slavery in Cuba* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988); Verena Martínez Alier, *Marriage, Class and Colour in Nineteenth-Century Cuba*, 2nd ed. (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1989); Joan Casanovas, *Bread, or Bullets! Urban Labor and Spanish Colonialism in Cuba, 1850–1898* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1998); and Ada Ferrer, *Insurgent Cuba: Race, Nation, and Revolution, 1868–1898* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1999). On La Escalera, see Robert L. Paquette, *Sugar Is Made with Blood: The Conspiracy of La Escalera and the Conflict Between Empires over Slavery in Cuba* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1988).

as under the Hapsburgs and Bourbons. Finally, the nature of the Spanish state also changed significantly, from the Hapsburg and Bourbon absolutist monarchy to a liberal constitutional monarchy. As liberals dedicated to the rule of law, private property, and fundamental civil rights (though not, for the most part, to democracy), Spain's new leaders clearly recognized the contradictions in the new order opened by the persistence of colonialism and the reinvigoration of slavery.

How they governed and exploited this new colonial regime has come under increasing scrutiny, especially from historians in Spain, in recent years. Barcelona has been one of the centers of these works, in no small part because nineteenth-century Catalan merchants and manufacturers were among the primary beneficiaries of the reduced yet retrenched colonial order. Martín Rodrigo y Alharilla's new study of Antonio López, the first Marquis of Comillas, and his heir, Claudio López, is a rich example of the new strategies of economic exploitation in the nineteenth century and their impact, especially on the metropolis. Rodrigo's research is extensive, echoing the broad reach of the Comillas dynasty. Much of his work was done in notarial archives—in Santiago de Cuba, Matanzas, Barcelona, Madrid, Alicante, Valencia, Cádiz, and Vilanova i la Geltrú—to reconstruct the family's investments and properties

Antonio López was a Cantabrian immigrant to Cuba who made his early fortune in the 1840s, precisely when the Cuban slave economy was undergoing further expansion. López invested in a range of businesses, including a retail shop and extensive land holdings. Perhaps more importantly, he purchased slaves, plantations, and outfitted his own ship, the "General Armeo," to traffic slaves between Africa and Cuba. Upon returning to Spain, López settled in Barcelona rather than his native Cantabria (though he invested throughout the Peninsula). From his base there, López and eventually his son Claudio expanded the family's holdings, especially regarding the colonies. López founded the *Compañía Transatlántica* that dominated government business with the colonies and invested in institutions like the *Banco Hispano Colonial*. The Lópezes turned their attention to Philippine tobacco in the late nineteenth century when the government sought to stimulate trade between Spain and its major Pacific colony. They also invested in mining in Spain's small African possessions.

Rodrigo's is an especially detailed study of the economic and social dynamics of colonial exploitation in the aftermath of the Spanish American revolutions and Spain's liberal revolution.¹⁵ Antonio López was only the most successful of numerous Spanish merchants and planters who

15. See also Angel Bahamonde and José Cayuela, *Hacer las Américas: Las élites coloniales en el siglo XIX* (Madrid: Alianza Editorial, 1992); and Astrid Cubano Iguina, *Un puente entre Mallorca y Puerto Rico: La emigración de Sóller, 1830–1930* (Gijón: Ediciones Júcar, 1993).

traveled to Cuba in the nineteenth century to make their fortune before returning to Spain where they invested in real estate, manufacturing, and banking. Jordi Maluquer de Motes and Josep Maria Fradera are two of the leaders not only in reconstructing Spain's exploitation of the colonies in the nineteenth century but also in reconsidering the impact of the colonies on the political economy of Catalonia and liberal Spain, more broadly. Both show the centrality of the protected Cuban market to Spanish and Catalan merchants, shippers, and producers, the Catalan role in the growth of Cuban slavery, and the migration of Catalans and other Spaniards to the Caribbean, especially Cuba.¹⁶

Fradera's collection of related essays, *Gobernar colonias*, focuses on how Spanish liberals grappled with colonialism and slavery while they reconstituted the state after the Spanish American revolutions and Spain's own revolutions and civil wars.¹⁷ Whereas most Spanish historians of nineteenth-century colonialism have dedicated their research to topics like economic and political institutions and migration, Fradera devotes two of his essays to what might be called colonial culture.¹⁸ Here, he interrogates the problems posed to Spanish liberalism by issues like un-free labor and racial difference. When Spain consolidated liberal, constitutional rule in the 1830s, it took an unprecedented step by expelling colonial deputies from the metropolitan Cortes and ruling Cuba, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines through the office of the Captain General (71–93). Though military and authoritarian rule might seem the norm in retrospect, in the context of the early nineteenth century this move was novel. During Spain's earlier revolutionary periods (1810–14 and 1820–23), the colonies had sent representatives to the metropolitan legislature. One might easily explain the expulsion of the deputies in the 1830s in reference to a Spanish backlash against creoles after the Spanish American revolutions or to *realpolitik* in the face of continued civil war in Spain and the potential for unrest in a major slave society like Cuba.¹⁹

16. By Maluquer de Motes, see "El mercado colonial antillano en el siglo XIX," in *Agricultura, comercio colonial y crecimiento económico en la España contemporánea*, edited by Jordi Nadal and Gabriel Tortella (Barcelona: Ariel, 1974), 322–57; and *Nación e inmigración: Los españoles en Cuba (ss. XIX y XX)* (Gijón: Ediciones Júcar, 1992). By Fradera, "La participación catalana en el tráfico d'esclaus," *Recerques* 16 (1984): 118–39; and *Indústria y mercat: Les bases comercials de la indústria catalana moderna (1814–1845)* (Barcelona: Crítica, 1987).

17. See also his *Filipinas, la colonia más peculiar: La hacienda pública en la definición de la política colonial, 1762–1868* (Madrid: Consejo Superior de Investigaciones Científicas (CSIC), 1999).

18. See Frederick Cooper and Ann Laura Stoler, eds. *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois Age* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

19. See Juan Pérez de la Riva, ed. *Correspondencia reservada del Capitan General D. Miguel Tacón* (Havana: Biblioteca Nacional José Martí, 1963); and Jesús Raúl Navarro García, *Entre esclavos y constituciones (el colonialismo liberal de 1837 en Cuba)* (Seville: CSIC, 1991).

These explanations are not unconvincing. However, in his essay "Raza y ciudadanía" (51–69), Fradera introduces a new problematic into the discussion. He argues that while political expediency was important to Spanish legislators and colonial officials, so also were the ideological issues raised by the persistence of slavery in a liberal regime. Under Hapsburg and Bourbon absolutism, Spain had ruled its colonies upon principles that supposed natural and legal inequalities between and within societies. Not only had Spain governed "the Indies" to its own benefit, but legally defined racial groups had enjoyed quite different rights and duties. Thus, the transition from the old regime to the new raised the daunting issue of equality before the law in the context of a slave regime that was continuously expanding. Moreover, who was a "Spaniard" became more complicated. The Constitution of Cádiz (1812) had placed some racial restrictions on Spanishness that discriminated against people of African ancestry. Would the new regime do the same? Ultimately, the liberals of the 1830s chose to defer these questions to a later date, and it was not until Cuban patriots forced their hand in 1868 by rebelling against Spanish rule that the metropolis seriously considered them again (and would wrestle with them for the remainder of the century). Fradera has thus raised issues that complicate the question of how Spain governed its colonies in the nineteenth century. He also troubles the waters of another field, a now rich historiography on Spanish nationalism and national identity in the liberal era, that has remained oddly impervious to any discussion of race, slavery, and colonialism.²⁰ However, as Fradera shows in his essays, colonialism was not external to liberal nationalism but ever present in its development.

Jordi Maluquer de Motes' new work continues his explorations in economic and demographic history. *España en la crisis de 1898: De la gran depresión a la modernización económica del siglo XX* departs from assumptions about the nature of Spanish colonialism in ways that echo the Steins' conclusions:

En realidad, España nunca fue una gran potencia y en el siglo XIX menos que nunca. El Imperio español desde sus comienzos fue un gigante con pies de barro, con una población sumida en una pobreza atroz, a beneficio de una aristocracia mentecata y, todavía más, en provecho del resto de las potencias europeas. (11)

Under the Hapsburgs and Bourbons, as the Steins show, the privatization of political power and the infiltration of Spain's monopolistic colonial economy by foreign merchants undermined the monarchy's economic and military position. In the nineteenth century, the gravest

20. José Álvarez Junco, *Mater dolorosa: La idea de España en el siglo XIX* (Madrid: Taurus, 2001).

structural weakness of Spanish rule in Cuba was the overwhelming importance of the U.S. market for Cuban sugar. Though the Spanish government and Spanish merchants benefited from the protectionist commercial system, the Spanish market was negligible for Cuba's sugar producers. By the end of the century, virtually the entire sugar crop was destined for the United States. This increasing disjuncture between political sovereignty and economic dependence was eventually one of the major factors leading to the eruption of war between Cuba and Spain and the intervention of the United States in 1898. Maluquer de Motes wryly notes that: "La dependencia de un Gobierno con intereses distintos a los norteamericanos, y a veces contrarios, tenía los días contados" (22).

While the United States trounced Spain in the short-lived war and Spain relinquished its Caribbean and Pacific colonies, Maluquer de Motes argues that the war and decolonization were not the "desastre" lamented by generations of Spanish historians, intellectuals, and politicians, but the beginning of Spain's true economic modernization. Though the losses incurred in the war were tremendous, the government actually emerged with little foreign debt as it had financed the military operations with its own resources. The devaluation of the *peseta* created the conditions for significant investment in the Spanish economy (Maluquer de Motes titles this section of the study "Un abundante río de oro"). Investment came from three directions: repatriated capital from the ex-colonies, foreign capital, and remittances from the hundreds of thousands of Spaniards who migrated to Latin America—not only Cuba and Puerto Rico but also Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, and Uruguay—between the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Under these conditions, all branches of the Spanish economy witnessed significant growth in the years following 1898. Even trade with Cuba remained significant. Though Cuba figured less prominently in Spain's overall exports the balance of trade between Spain and Cuba was even more favorable than before the war. One Cuban economist noted ironically, and with some exaggeration, that: "Seguimos siendo, desde el punto de vista mercantil, una colonia que la ex-metropolí todavía explota."²¹

Maluquer de Motes' findings and tone would seem to harmonize with many of the works that appeared in Spain during the centennial of 1898 which were generally optimistic about Spain's past one hundred years. From the present of a mainstream western European democracy, few seem to consider the "desastre" to be such anymore.²² Yet

21. Carlos M. Trelles, quoted in Maluquer de Motes, *España en la crisis de 1898*, 203.

22. An especially ebullient reflection can be found in Juan Pablo Fusi's essay "España: el fin del siglo XX," *Claves de razón práctica*, no. 87 (1998): 2–9. See also, Fernando García de Cortázar, "Un '98 sin llanto," *Historia* 16, no. 257 (1997): 3, 72–75.

while Maluquer de Motes likewise downplays the “desastre,” he also considerably qualifies Spain’s successes and ends his study on a gloomier note. Even though economic growth was robust in the early twentieth century, Spain continued to lag far behind other western European countries in all indicators of modernization as it does to this very day. Indeed, as Maluquer de Motes argues that the present mirrors the past, one is reminded of the Bourbon *projectistas* that stand at the heart of the Steins’ analysis of Spanish decline and stagnation:

La economía española parece tener vocación de economía periférica. Nunca se ha llegado a plantear un esfuerzo colectivo capaz de impulsar las transformaciones necesarias para incorporarse con decisión a los países avanzados y para construir las bases necesarias para dar soporte a un auténtico estado del bienestar. En este sentido, el siglo XX se cierra más o menos igual que como había comenzado. (210)