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### Lance Grahn, *The Political Economy of Smuggling: Regional Informal Economies in Early Bourbon New Granada*

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*The Political Economy of Smuggling: Regional Informal Economies in Early Bourbon New Granada.* By Lance Grahn. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1997. xvii + 262 pp. Maps, charts, tables, appendixes, notes, bibliography, index. \$55.00 cloth.)

Lance Grahn's study of Spain's largely unsuccessful war on smuggling in colonial New Granada abounds with fascinating scenes of smuggling: in 1720, Sergeant Juan Romero was arrested in Barranquilla for possessing contraband material (four French shirts and twelve table napkins); in 1747, officials in Cartagena seized a contraband cargo, which contained wax, cloth, and pocket-handkerchiefs. Yet contraband goods themselves are not the principal focus of this volume. We never learn why Romero possessed twelve contraband napkins, nor do illegal handkerchiefs receive much attention as such. Certainly the smuggled objects themselves are intriguing. Textiles and foodstuffs seem to have constituted the bulk of most contraband shipments, but the contraband trade also dealt in playing cards, hats, scissors, children's toys, medicines, and quill pens. Who purchased these illegal dolls? What might this tell us about patterns of consumption in eighteenth-century Latin America? Grahn describes the contraband trade as an illustration of eighteenth century consumerism and an indication of New Granada's distinctive American identity (p. 4), but these issues are not developed in the course of the book. This is not, nor does it claim to be, a social history of smuggling.

What this book does do, and does very well, is map the economic dimensions of the contraband trade on New Granada's Caribbean coast. Grahn's study is based on archival material from nearly a dozen repositories in Spain, Colombia, and the United States. He has examined not only data on coast-guard expenditures and income from *comisos* (the seizure of contraband vessels) but also interrogations with individual smugglers and other personal accounts. He presents convincing evidence that smuggling constituted a "key element of the political economy of northern New Granada" (p. xv). While

acknowledging that any study of illegal activity must of necessity be incomplete and partial, he has marshalled an imposing array of statistics that document the ebb and flow of contraband in northern New Granada across the eighteenth century. Some very large hauls were made; a Dutch frigate captured in 1729 by the coast guard was found to contain merchandise valued at over \$213,000, although most catches were smaller. Beyond the dozens of tables listing contraband seizures and sightings of smuggling vessels, Grahn also presents other interesting measures of the pervasive influence of contraband on the colonial economy. Revenue from captured contraband was what kept the provincial treasury in Riohacha solvent, while so much cloth was smuggled into the New Granadian interior that textile prices were lower in Bogota than they were in Cartagena itself.

Grahn divides his study into three sections, which look in turn at the provinces of Riohacha, Santa Marta, and Cartagena. Grahn claims that smuggling took on somewhat different forms in these three regions; in Riohacha, in particular, the Guajiro Indians largely controlled the contraband trade and presented a persistent challenge to Spanish authority. It would have been interesting to learn more about why the Guajiros participated so actively in smuggling while the Chimila Indians of Santa Marta Province did not. In his examination of Santa Marta and Cartagena, Grahn focuses on the extent to which smuggling permeated the colonial administration. Grahn documents the involvement of New Granada's first viceroy, *Jorge Villalonga*, in illegal commerce and notes that the Jesuits were not immune to the lure of illicit trade. He also presents good evidence of the ironic fact that many of the officials employed specifically to prevent smuggling were themselves active *contrabandistas*.

Grahn attributes the pervasiveness of contraband on New Granada's Caribbean coast to the permissive climate created by corrupt officials and to Spain's inability to supply its colony with sufficient quantities of legal merchandise, although he notes that, occasionally, well-armed smugglers forced contraband merchandise onto an unwilling public. Such remarks suggest other issues which future studies of smuggling might explore. It would be interesting to read an elaboration of the social context in which smuggling occurred. What sorts of relationships developed between smugglers and their clients? Grahn suggests variously that smuggling united rich and poor and that campaigns against contraband heightened social tensions. But these are issues for subsequent studies, not lacunae in the book

under review. Grahn's book is an extremely useful and well-documented study of illegal commerce in colonial New Granada.

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