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### Caroline A. Williams, *Between Resistance and Adaptation: Indigenous Peoples and the Colonisation of the Chocó, 1510-1753*

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## Book Reviews

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*Between Resistance and Adaptation: Indigenous Peoples and the Colonisation of the Chocó, 1510-1753.* By Caroline A. Williams. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004. x + 254 pp. Maps, notes, appendix, bibliography, index. £40.00 cloth.)

Caroline Williams' ambitious study of Spanish-Indian relations in New Granada's Pacific lowlands (known by the 1560s as El Chocó) is an engaging examination of a gold-mining frontier zone. This book explores the period from the first contact between Europeans and Indians (in particular, the Citará Indians) in the early sixteenth century until the middle of the eighteenth century, when the region's Franciscan friars began to abandon their missions. Williams skillfully chronicles the protracted and complex process of Spanish colonization of the Chocó, highlighting the various military campaigns between the 1630s and 1670s, the long periods of peace and accommodation, the failure of the Franciscan missions, and the violent Indian rebellion of 1684-1687 in which dozens of Spaniards as well as African slaves and Indians were murdered. Williams concludes that the Chocó was never truly pacified and that the Citará Indians successfully resisted evangelization and acculturation efforts.

Hostile Indians, dense forests, and difficult terrain, as well as the discovery of gold in other parts of New Granada all discouraged early colonization campaigns in the Chocó. In the sixteenth century, only a small number of Spaniards moved into the region, hoping to capitalize on the area's gold deposits; however, it was not until the following century that Spaniards initiated a concerted effort to pacify and colonize the area. Williams is careful to point out that violence and resistance did not dominate Spanish-Indian relations. Where reciprocity governed, especially when it involved access to highly desirable metal tools, the region experienced long periods of accommodation, cooperation, and peace. Nevertheless, when Spaniards abandoned this approach, as exemplified by Juan Vélez de Guevara's ill-fated attempts to pacify the region by force, alliances quickly disappeared, and Spaniards were met with fierce resistance.

Williams characterizes the process of evangelization among the Citará as an unmitigated failure; she sees no evidence of the religious change, however subtle, that occurred in so many other regions of Spanish America. Owing to the shortage of Spanish clergy, the region's first chapels were soon converted to more secular purposes, such as construction workshops or hencoops (p. 95). Even after 1673, when the Chocó came under the control of the Franciscan order, little changed. The eleven Franciscans originally assigned to the territory were unable to overcome the overwhelming obstacles of a widely dispersed native population, a difficult and expansive terrain, and general resistance to attempts to congregate native communities into mission

settlements. Frustrated, five or six of the eleven Franciscans departed within the first year.

Williams never explains convincingly why the Citará in particular proved so resistant to the teachings of the Franciscans. In fact, we learn little about the motivations, aspirations, beliefs, or concerns of the Citará themselves. Furthermore, in a region with more African slaves than Spaniards, it is curious that Williams does not mention more about the relationships between Indians and Africans. These shortcomings perhaps stem from the nature of the evidence, or lack thereof. Williams is correct to lament the paucity of documentary evidence for the Chocó. Unlike other regions of the Americas where the examination of native accounts has led to fascinating new perspectives on the colonial period, scholars who work on colonial New Granada must rely almost exclusively on Spanish records. However, it should be noted that Williams' findings are based on archival material from the AGI in Seville; she also had access at the University of Warwick to the entire microfilmed collection of the *Fondo Caciques e Indios* (seventy-eight *legajos*) from Colombia's national archives (AGNC). It is unfortunate that Williams was unable to conduct archival work in Colombia; an examination of the AGNC's general catalogue reveals hundreds of documents that focus on the Chocó and the Citará Indians, including lengthy reports on the status of the region's missions written by the Franciscans José de Córdoba (1680) and Bernardo Guarín (1726-1754). Furthermore, it is likely that much more material exists in archives in Popayán and Antioquia. How these documents will be considered in the context of Williams' findings remains to be seen, but their existence offers exciting possibilities and should encourage future scholarship.

In spite of these criticisms, Williams should be commended for this pioneering study. *Between Resistance and Adaptation* is a welcome contribution to the historiography of colonial New Granada and an important initial step to understanding a region that has received very little scholarly attention.

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*Liberty and Equality in Caribbean Colombia, 1770-1835.* By Aline Helg. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004. xiv + 363 pp. Illustrations, maps, chart, table, notes, bibliography, index. \$59.95 cloth, \$22.50 paper.)

Aline Helg has produced a fine work of Atlantic history. This well-researched book provides a wealth of information on one of the region's least known areas. The author has, moreover, gone to some lengths to locate her