

Colonial Latin American Historical Review

Volume 19

Issue 3 *Second Series, Volume 2, Issue 3 (Summer 2014)*

Article 8

6-1-2014

Viviana L. Grieco, The Politics of Giving in the Viceroyalty of Rio de la Plata: Donors, Lenders, Subjects, and Citizens

Donna J. Guy

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/clahr>

Recommended Citation

Guy, Donna J.. "Viviana L. Grieco, The Politics of Giving in the Viceroyalty of Rio de la Plata: Donors, Lenders, Subjects, and Citizens." *Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 19, 3 (2014): 434. <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/clahr/vol19/iss3/8>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by UNM Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Colonial Latin American Historical Review by an authorized editor of UNM Digital Repository. For more information, please contact amywinter@unm.edu.

physical condition, including the bodily marks of scars and scarification, of 166 slaves arriving in Popayán (pp. 69-73). What did it mean for both free and enslaved people to bare witness to the “country marks,” “confusing lines,” and piercings of slaves noted as Mandinga, Mina, or Lucumí? Bryant’s work also enhances the existing literature on how maroons in the periphery made indelible impressions on the juridical landscape. Bryant argues that other colonial subjects did not actually have to see these marked bodies, because their firm existence in laws and their actual presence in the kingdom haunted the development of colonial governance and socio-legal status.

Bryant briefly addresses the impact of indigenous servitude on governance in the Kingdom of Quito, noting the symbolic and legal differences between tribute-paying vassals and chattel slaves. A more interwoven analysis of how both African slavery and coerced indigenous labor worked synchronically to exemplify royal mastery and governance throughout the work would have benefitted the reader. However, by centering slavery irrespective of population size, Bryant exposes the exciting potential for future comparative studies, perhaps with gold and silver mining centers in Peru or Mexico. Bryant’s methodological call to action is clear: by studying slavery solely as an economic endeavor and a form of labor management, we ignore critical aspects of the experience and its influence. As the author reminds us, even in the hinterlands, “[slavery] was the baseline against which all other social relations were measured” (p. 148).

Danielle Terrazas Williams
Africana Studies
 Oberlin College

The Politics of Giving in the Viceroyalty of Rio de la Plata: Donors, Lenders, Subjects, and Citizens. By Viviana L. Grieco. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2014. ix + 298 pp. Map, tables, notes, appendixes, index. \$55.00 cloth.)

Viviana L. Grieco has written a unique and very significant work. Studying the role of *donativos* in the funding of the Spanish Imperial government in the late colonial period, she shows that these donations in the Río de la Plata in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were neither coercive nor as arbitrary as other historians have posited. Instead, these sums, given freely by church groups, merchants, or bureaucrats, served a variety of purposes including improving the political and social conditions of donors, resolving problems of how to collect long standing debts, and promoting the interests of key peninsular groups in the region. People of lower status could voice their desires to improve their lot as well, but had fewer chances of guaranteed success. Grieco builds upon Ann Twinam’s study of *gracias a*

sacar, donations offered with hopes of removing the stain of illegitimate birth and lower social status so that donors or their family could experience greater social mobility, as well as Susan Socolow's study of merchants in the Río de la Plata, their families and their socio-political strategies.

Unlike some who developed generalizations based upon European political models, particularly that of Great Britain, Grieco's study of all the extant donations reveals that Bourbon Spain had few prospects of raising taxes without representation, and the donations supplied many funds, particularly during war time. In a clear analysis of comparative historiography, the author concludes that Spain did not need the constitutional monarchy of the British to fund its projects. For those who are unfamiliar with economic history, Grieco carefully and clearly covers the appropriate historiography, as well as the complex set of laws that defined commercial transactions. The donations themselves, granted before a notary public to show it was done of free will, often followed public festivities of a religious or secular nature. They did not have to present such gifts in the form of scarce currency, but often came from material donations in the form of animals, cash crops, or textiles, or the hopes of future income or payments. The differences could be seen in a regional breakdown as well as a change in donors over time. By the revolutionary period, Spanish merchants contributed far less, while military groups and less wealthy members of the community, as well as women and non-whites, began to appear as contributors. These statements are supported by clear diagrams of donors and amounts contributed across the viceroyalty for each region.

What Viviana Grieco has done for the Río de la Plata needs to be undertaken for other parts of the empire to determine if this viceroyalty had a typical experience with *donativos* or whether it was exceptional. Furthermore, these loans need to be contextualized further to determine whether they provide an indicator of which area would continue to support Spain, rather than support independence. In this way we will be able to ascertain how valid her assumptions are regarding Spanish imperial rule.

Donna J. Guy
Professor Emerita
Ohio State University and University of Arizona

Violent Delights, Violent Ends: Sex, Race, and Honor in Colonial Cartagena de Indias. By Nicole von Germeten. (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2013. xi + 304 pp. Notes, bibliography, index. \$29.95 paper.)

The allure of archival work lies in retrieving voices from under the shadows of official records. Nicole von Germeten's exhaustive research of the civil and inquisitorial archives of Cartagena de Indias sheds light on the role sexuality, honor, and violence played in women's lives through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. *Violent Delights, Violent Ends* explores