

*New Iberian World: A Documentary History of the Discovery and Settlement of Latin America to the Early 17th Century.* Edited, with commentaries, by JOHN H. PARRY and ROBERT G. KEITH, with the assistance of MICHAEL JIMENEZ. Five vols. New York: Times Books, 1984. Illustrations. Documents. Maps. Index. Glossary. Bibliography. Notes. Pp. 2912. Cloth. \$500.

Should any historian of modern Latin America be unaware, or any colonial historian grow forgetful, of how voluminously and diversely Spaniards of the sixteenth century wrote about their new American empire, this collection will serve as a corrective. Here are some 2,600 pages, or about two and a quarter million words, of translated text—one recoils at the thought of how much labor must have gone into compiling these five volumes.

This is a history in documents, some of them archival manuscripts, and others printed texts of various sorts. Much of the translation has been done by the editors and their associates. They have also drawn on previously published translations of some better-known documents. The format resembles that of James Lockhart and Enrique Otte's *Letters and People of the Spanish Indies: The Sixteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1976): documents assembled into connected groups, with a general introduction for each group, and shorter commentaries, prefacing each text. These editorial comments aim at providing factual settings for the texts, rather than interpretations of them.

Documents are grouped predominantly by geographical area, though that also implies some chronological separation. For instance, much of volume I consists of texts on Native American societies and Iberian precedents for expansion, and therefore deals largely with matters before 1500. This volume also offers a long and useful section on the formal structure of the Spanish empire—treaties, bulls, formative laws, administrative regulations, and the like. Volume II is given over to the Caribbean, and so contains texts mostly from before 1550. Volume III is devoted to Central America and Mexico, and again emphasizes the first half of the century. Materials on the Andes occupy volume IV. And in volume V, the peripheral regions of sixteenth-century Ibero-America find their place. It is a larger one than they usually receive in colonial histories, and that is welcome. Brazil, however, suffers from being slotted in here. It is granted only 100 pages—barely four percent of the span of the collection, which must be even less attention than it usually receives in survey courses on colonial Latin America. At the end of each volume is a selection of maps relevant to the content. These are welcome illustrations of the great events recounted in the documents; but in several cases, reduction in size of the originals, added to the graininess of the monochrome reproductions, makes for loss of detail and hence of utility.

However laborious the preparation of so many texts for publication in English must have been, nonetheless the task of winnowing them out from the immense harvest of sixteenth-century Spanish American documents at our disposal must

have been yet more trying. Much good grain has inevitably been rejected. Vice-roy don Francisco de Toledo, for instance, is granted much less space than his formative activity in early Peru would suggest he deserves. The editors say (I, xlvi) that they have tried to break away from the familiar major documents, and generally to keep “a balance between theory and practice, between legislation and effective enforcement, between judicial and administrative acts, between secular and ecclesiastical considerations; between the public and the private, the complacent and the complaining, the prosperous and the humble.”

What is not made explicit by Parry and Keith, however, nor seems implicit in the selection of documents, is the intended readership of this collection. The result of trying to maintain the various balances may well have produced something for everybody, and not enough for anybody in particular. The ideal audience would perhaps be the “gentleman scholar” of time past, someone with the inclination and leisure to wander, browse, and ruminate in these varied pastures—but few such exist today. What is here, then, for our practical needs? Researchers may find a quick lead to a chronicle or an archival source on an unfamiliar region. Teachers will find graphic quotations and examples to color their lectures. Graduate students and comparative historians unable to read the Spanish originals will find the grouping of early codes and administrative ordinances an enormous convenience. Diligent undergraduates, using the lengthy index, will enrich a term paper with information not to be had in textbooks. All this is most useful; none is essential.

Perhaps the best question to ask in judging such a collection is: What sort of history of the early Iberian New World could be written from it as a sole source? Clearly, Brazil would come off badly. But even for Spanish America, the result would be unsatisfactory. The energy of Spanish activity in sixteenth-century America, the freshness of the vision, and the sense of successful grappling with vast unknowns and difficulties—those are transparently clear in these volumes. It is valuable to hear these heroic themes so confidently played. We have tended to close our ears to them of late. On the other hand, they are not enough at present. That sort of history was written long ago, probably better than we could do it today. Contemporary writing of colonial history, whether social, economic, administrative, intellectual, or anything else, requires other facts and notions that must be teased out of sources that are not amenable to collection in edited translations: notarial registers, series of treasury accounts, voluminous lawsuits, and, at the very least, complete runs of administrative correspondence. Especially if the inner working of colonial society in its full cultural diversity and tension is to become visible, most of what is in the *New Iberian World* will not serve well. The view is through Spanish eyes, or at best through those of Indians heavily tinted with Spanish qualities, such as Garcilaso de la Vega and Felipe Huamán Poma de Ayala. Both of these writers receive some space here. Arguably they warrant more. (Why none of Poma’s eminently reproducible drawings?—one might well

ask.) But even had they been given more say, the native side of the sixteenth century would still be underrepresented. Ethnohistorians who in the past decade or so have begun to depict the Indian world of the early colonial period have gone through the massing of detail from local archival sources. This is a road that Parry and Keith could not follow, for practical reasons of time and expense, among others.

The study of sixteenth-century Spanish America, then, can be said to have moved beyond the historical vision offered by the texts that make up this collection. Possibly, indeed, these five volumes are best regarded in a retrospective sense—as a final expression of Parry's interests as a historian, a completing of the circle of his work. Here, laid out in the vivid and forceful words of sixteenth-century Spaniards, is reconnaissance, exploration, and conquest; here is the formation of the Spanish seaborne empire, a large part of the story of Europe in the wider world. In these letters, laws, and chronicles we can admire with Parry the energy and creativity of an expanding Spain; but, as churlish laborers still digging in different parts of that same field, we shall be constantly reminded that this is not the whole story.

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*The Cambridge History of Latin America*. Vols. I and II, *Colonial Latin America*.

Edited by LESLIE BETHELL. New York: Cambridge University Press, 1984. Maps. Notes. Figures. Tables. Bibliographical Essays. Index. Vol. I, Pp. xx, 645. Cloth. \$65.00. Vol. II, Pp. xx, 912. Cloth. \$75.00.

Leopoldo Zea, looking toward the 500th anniversary of Columbus's landfall, speaks of 1492 as the beginning of the "encoverry" of America—imperial (and later national, I would add) concealments of what developed during the five centuries following the first consequential encounter of Europeans and native Americans. He calls for contributions to the "discovery" of the historical identity of Spanish America as a more fitting commemoration of 1492 than further studies of Columbus and his fellow navigators ("América: ¿Descubrimiento o encubrimiento?") *Cuadernos Americanos* CCLVIII: 1, January–February 1985, 102–104).

These first two volumes of the *Cambridge History of Latin America* (CHLA) are a grand, early step toward Zea's goal for 1992, at least for readers of English. Conceived as "a high-level synthesis of existing knowledge" that will provide "the first large-scale, authoritative survey of Latin America's unique historical experience" (I, xiv), most of the 34 chapters on the colonial period more than achieve these goals, and with barely a nod in the direction of the early voyages and "Age of Discovery." Four chapters treat regional Indian societies before European colonization and ten others deal with Brazil, both subjects that are slighted in older, slimmer surveys of Latin America's colonial history.

The CHLA is an international endeavor directed by the steady hand of a Brit-