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## **Negros, mulatos, esclavos y libertos en la Costa Rica del siglo XVII (review)**

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REVIEW

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**In lieu of an abstract, here is a brief excerpt of the content:**

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***Negros, mulatos, esclavos y libertos en la Costa Rica del siglo XVII.*** By Rina Cáceres. (Mexico City: Instituto Panamericano de Geografía e Historia, 2000. ix+130 pp., introduction, maps, bibliography. \$20.00 paper.)

In a vivid, smooth, and engaging analysis, Rina Cáceres explores the condition of the black population in Costa Rica from the first moments of European [End Page 758] contact. While the focus of her award-winning study is on the seventeenth century, she briefly assesses the demographic presence of blacks and mulattos into the opening decades of the nineteenth century. We learn that while the Afro-Costa Rican population never approached the levels seen elsewhere in the New World, by the 1770s, their numbers were sufficiently large that they may have equaled the number of whites in the colony. By 1800, they may have even surpassed the numbers of both the white and the indigenous population sectors.

One of Cáceres's primary concerns is to provide a context for understanding the changing demographic profile of the eighteenth century. She centers her inquiry on the following question: given the dramatic growth of the black populace in the eighteenth century, is it correct to attribute the population boom to a major shift in the Costa Rican economy, particularly the advent of cacao cultivation? In other words, were blacks mainly brought to Costa Rica to perform labor on cacao estates? Certainly, the limited historiography on the subject supports this conclusion; however, Cáceres believes that such an interpretation diminishes our understanding of the full involvement of blacks in colonial Costa Rican society. Using an array of primary sources from Costa Rica's National Archives and from the León Fernández and Richard Konetzke collections, Cáceres proceeds to study in detail the types of transactions in which slaves appeared in the seventeenth century. Furthermore, she uses these same repositories to explore the multifaceted lives of Costa Rica's free-colored population, including its tribute responsibilities and its involvement in the militias, confraternities, and artisan professions and in the arena of domestic service. The result is the most complete study to date on the black population of colonial Costa Rica.

The book is structurally divided into three sections. The first part locates Costa Rica within the broader seventeenth-century world. Here, we are able to appreciate the sluggish tempo of the Costa Rican economy in light of the "general crisis" of the seventeenth century. We walk through the evolution of the region's fiscal development, from being initially based upon tribute exports to being based upon farming and animal husbandry. Finally, we witness the impact of the introduction of cacao. This section also carefully explains the world of indigenous labor and tribute systems as well as the significance of the autonomous townships (*pueblos de indios*). Additionally, we survey the military organization of Costa Rican society while retracing the steps of the early Spanish explorers and landowners (*encomenderos*). In short, this section provides a crucial and well-crafted overview of Costa Rican history, but at the same time, it is difficult to extract the meaning of these historical processes for the evolution of Costa Rica's black population. [End Page 759]

The second and third sections concentrate almost exclusively on Afro-Costa Ricans, beginning with the experience of slavery. Indeed, these sections comprise the core of the book. It is here that Cáceres surveys slave-pricing structures and assesses the multiple uses of slaves in Costa Rican society. Importantly, we learn that slaves steadily increased their presence throughout the course of the seventeenth century and were not simply valued as laborers. They performed a vital economic function for the elite, serving as a substitute for cash in a fiscal environment where liquidity was hard to come by. Moreover, slaves were not just exchanged on the auction block, they were also distributed amongst the elite through dowries, wills, and testaments. Of course, this is nothing new in the colonial world—slaves were circulated in this fashion throughout the Americas...

sity degree, traveled abroad, and returned to Guatemala as an educator. With this account of his life, Wuqu' Ajpub' offers an analysis of the educational system he is attempting to change, noting that it is crucial to use Mayan concepts as well as Mayan language in education. He appeals to his colleagues and compatriots to overcome divisionism. In the final chapter, Garzón recaps the earlier chapters. She stresses the instrumental reasons for learning Spanish and spreading its contexts of use. She acknowledges the hostility of the hegemonic culture to Kaqchikel and to other Mayan languages and their speaking communities. But in keeping with the volume's general theme of depressing statistics and case studies coupled with optimistic projections, the volume ends with a possible scenario for the preservation of Kaqchikel as a viable language in a vibrant community; this scenario calls for an attitude adjustment on the part of Kaqchikel parents and their children as well as non-Mayan Guatemalans, so that all will value the richness and diversity of cultural knowledge embodied in the language and will use those resources in constructing a livable future for all.

These two books capture two faces of Mayan Guatemala, a "folk" face that provides a cultural blueprint and an analytic face documenting the struggle to be modern and Mayan. While the conflict between traditional social organization, domains of language use, religious practice, and patterns of economic production are explicitly brought into focus and examined as they impact the shift from Kaqchikel monolingualism to Spanish in the Garzón and colleagues volume, these conflicts are tacitly displayed in the stories in the Sexton volume, which deal with fishing, farming, dealing with rich compadres, accommodating the military and police forces, and acknowledging traditional religious practice. James Sexton provides a context and exegesis of Ignacio Bizarro Ujpán's collection of tales. Wuqu' Ajpub' offers a life history instantiating the processes exemplified by his coauthors and a critique of the common academic and political insistence on splitting Maya into language/culture groups. The unity of these works, though different in aim, scope, and language group, speaks to the agenda of the Maya Movement leaders, as outlined by Brown, elaborated by Garzón, and instantiated by Wuqu' Ajpub'.

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Negros, mulatos, esclavos y libertos en la Costa Rica del siglo XVII, excimer, in the case of adaptive landscape systems of agriculture, is not included in its components, which is obvious in the force normal communications reactions, as well as the ontological bicameral Parliament.

Strategies for reducing inequalities and improving developmental outcomes for young children in low-income and middle-income countries, the distances of the planets from the Sun increases approximately exponentially (rule of Titius — Bode):  $d = 0.4 + 0.3 \cdot 2^n$  (and  $a$ )

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