

*“Dádivas, dones y dineros”: Aportes a una nueva historia de la corrupción en América Latina desde el imperio español a la modernidad.* Edited by CHRISTOPH ROSENMÜLLER and STEPHAN RUDERER. Bibliotheca Ibero-Americana. Madrid: Iberoamericana; Frankfurt: Vervuert, 2016. Tables. Notes. Bibliographies. 249 pp. Paper, €25.00.

What constitutes corrupt behavior, and how does corruption affect society? Christoph Rosenmüller and Stephan Ruderer have produced an edited volume providing historical snapshots of the discourse on corruption from early colonial Latin America to the middle of the twentieth century. The contributors explore these topics via a mix of archival research, media coverage, and secondary sources.

In a useful framing chapter, Ruderer and Rosenmüller review the historiography of corruption in Latin America. They advocate avoiding an “essentialist” approach that would apply a single standard of corruption to all societies in all possible periods of time (p. 12). In its stead, they propose to focus on the discourse regarding corruption to reveal different actors’ conceptualization of corruption, of proper action, and of the impact of corrupt behavior (p. 16).

The volume then presents four studies of corruption in the colonial era. L. Miguel Costa analyzes the debate over corruption in the Viceroyalty of Peru in the late sixteenth century. Costa analyzes complaints regarding the service of Fernando de Torres y Portugal as *virrey* of Peru as a window into early colonial governance practices, including the frequent use of patrimonial and patronage practices as well as the fragile legitimacy of the system when actors saw their interests as entering into direct conflict with others. Christoph Rosenmüller uses a wider temporal and geographic lens to study the evolving conceptualizations of corruption in colonial judicial debates during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Over the course of this period, he tracks the predominance of a view of corruption as stemming from bad breeding in the 1600s, followed by the emergence of a focus on corruption consisting in the violation of the law over the course of the 1700s. Guadalupe Pinzón Ríos engages in a detailed analysis of the intervention of Teodoro de Croix as a recently arrived colonial auditor in Acapulco. Pinzón Ríos discusses the many ways that captains, crews, and dockworkers skirted colonial trade regulations as well as some of the countervailing tactics that could be used by auditors such as Croix to check these behaviors and provide for better monitoring. The colonial component of this volume concludes with Horst Pietschmann’s essay on the Bourbon-era reforms of the 1800s. Pietschmann does well to observe the latent (and sometimes active) tensions in Spanish America among the crown authorities, the church authorities, and the criollo aristocracy, but the brevity of this essay makes it harder for him to bring these conflicts to life.

The second half of this volume consists of six case studies of corruption in distinct time periods of the postindependence era. Pablo Whipple provides a detailed assessment of the role of lawyers in mid-nineteenth-century Peru and of the evolving debate regarding how the broader society might adjust to the scarcity of trained attorneys. This study reveals how socioeconomic equality affected the justice system (and vice versa). In the lone comparative case study in this book, Stephan Ruderer compares the debate over

corruption's nature and its importance in Argentina and Uruguay during the late nineteenth century. Ruderer notes that charges of corruption were used to justify antisystem political behaviors in both countries but that while Argentines focused on electoral misconduct, Uruguayans tended to emphasize economic and administrative corruption. Inés Rojkind provides a detailed narrative of the public debate in Argentina surrounding the presidency of Miguel Juárez Celman. Rojkind chronicles how the Juárez Celman government defeated the armed insurrection of the Unión Cívica coalition in 1890 yet lost in the court of elite public opinion in the days following the rebellion. Andrés Reyes Rodríguez examines the career of a respected local politician in Aguascalientes during the dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz as a window into the dynamics of the Porfiriato, in which deplorable practices coexisted with some public servants whose work helped to legitimize the regime in some quarters. Jürgen Buchenau then provides a fascinating examination of Álvaro Obregón's rise to prominence in the Mexican Revolution, which deposed Díaz. The volume concludes with José Alberto Olivar's examination of the rush to punish corruption following the 1945 coup that ended the venal *gomecista* regime in Venezuela. This purge led also to an investigation of a respected public servant; these accusations weakened the legitimacy of the anticorruption crusade.

The editors have made good on their pledge to reveal how specific historical contexts shape varying visions of corruption and of its importance. This well-researched book is useful for students and researchers trying to understand how corrupt behaviors emerge, how corruption evolves, and how people's approaches to combating corruption are products of their context. What is missing in this volume is a concluding chapter that reflects on the trends among these ten specific case studies. If corruption changes with time and that discourse reveals larger truths about societies, what do the editors believe has changed or stayed the same in Latin America?

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