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## Review of Frances L. Ramos, Identity, Ritual, and Power in Colonial Puebla

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Since Mintz offers compelling overarching arguments about the region while also leaving room for debate, expansion, and further comparisons, this book will be an excellent choice for both undergraduate and graduate courses. Students will gain a deep appreciation of the centrality of the Caribbean in world history and especially of the roles of Haiti, Puerto Rico, and Jamaica in the increasing globalization of the early modern period. Moreover, readers will learn about the distinctiveness of the region, such as the differences between slavery in the Caribbean and the US South. Along the way, they will see the enduring connections between the past and the present and will understand the importance of interdisciplinary scholarship.

JULIA GAFFIELD, Georgia State University

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*Identity, Ritual, and Power in Colonial Puebla.* By FRANCES L. RAMOS.

Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012. Illustrations. Maps. Figure. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xxxiii, 247 pp. Paper, \$29.95.

Puebla was the second city of colonial Mexico, after the capital itself. In her book, Frances Ramos studies its political constellation as shaped by the public ceremonies of the city's *cabildo*, or ruling council. In eight chapters, not including the introduction and conclusion, she describes the different aspects of the *cabildo's* eighteenth-century *poblano* official public appearances, displays of power, and rituals. She bases her book on city accounts, *cabildo* minutes, royal *visita* reports, and lawsuits before the Council of the Indies.

She starts with a sketch of Puebla and its position in the colony, especially the relationship of its *cabildo* with the king and his representatives, the viceroys. She goes on to attend to how the city celebrated (and how much it spent on) the birth and death of Spain's kings and the more frequent arrival of the viceroys. The reception of a viceroy was the most costly event in the eighteenth-century city, and over the years the *cabildo* spent increasing amounts of money on it, to the point that the Bourbon government in Spain tried to cut down on expenses for local ceremonies. Apparently, the crown thought that too much money was being spent on local affairs, damaging the fiscal income of the central authorities. Ramos's point is that the *cabildo* deployed numerous public activities in the form of celebrations and rituals in order not only to keep the city together and define its identity but also to show its own role in *poblano* life, both secular and religious. In colonial society, Spaniards and Indians were administratively separated; the *cabildo* of Puebla was Spanish, and the city's Indians played a minor role in its official rituals.

Ramos dedicates the last two chapters of the book to power struggles secular authorities had both among themselves and with ecclesiastical authorities. She points to the structural "jurisdictional tensions" built into the colonial system from early on, but she also acknowledges that the balance of power had been arranged by custom. Tensions arose from shifts in the balance of power, which resulted from a change of privileges by

the crown, the usurpation of power by a new and ambitious official, and personal and family rivalries. In the eighteenth century, there was a considerable amount of friction between the secular cabildo and the city's *alcalde mayor* (senior royal officer) and Puebla's religious authorities, which consisted mainly of the bishop and the cathedral's chapter. In many cases the tensions were also expressed in public ceremonies, in which all authorities played a part. It was custom that authorities behave very politely toward each other, but when rivalries broke out they stopped greeting each other or denied each other privileges such as a prominent seat at the front at a ceremony or a seating place at all.

The book is well researched and offers a good historical description of the public and ceremonial side of poblano political life in the eighteenth century and of the many roles these ceremonies fulfilled in the city. Ramos writes clearly and in a lively style, even if the book contains some repetitions. Analytically, however, Ramos is less convincing. She writes that "few historians have concerned themselves with the political implications of [ceremonial] disputes," while those few who have considered these conflicts as "a counterpoint to the 'true' function of ritual" (p. 133). While this lack of attention is perhaps true for the scholarship on Latin American cities, the role of public ceremonies, ritual, and conflicts has certainly been studied in the context of early modern European towns. Ramos herself even writes that Puebla can be compared to cities in European parts of the Spanish empire. Such a comparison would have been helpful, as the book fails to address some important issues. The most obvious one is why the cabildo did spend so much of its time and money on public ceremonies, so much that the crown wanted it to cut back on expenses. Of course, rituals were part of the duties and obligations of the cabildo's members, but it is also likely that, in one way or another, the members profited from them. It also remains unclear from the book whether there were social or factional divisions in the city behind the many conflicts that Ramos describes. This would perhaps appear outside the scope of the book, given its focus on ritual, but to me the question is whether the political rituals were a device for ritualizing and canalizing tensions in the city by making a public display of city identity, unity, and coherence.

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*Finanzas piadosas y redes de negocios: Los mercaderes de la ciudad de México ante la crisis de Nueva España, 1804–1808.* By GUILLERMINA DEL VALLE PAVÓN.

Historia Económica. Mexico City: Instituto Mora, 2012. Figures. Tables. Notes.

Bibliography. Index. 262 pp. Paper.

Este documentado libro de Guillermina del Valle trata un tema que ha sido estudiado en forma abundante por la historiografía mexicanista y americanista en general. Como es sabido, en septiembre de 1808, un golpe de estado destituyó en la ciudad de México al virrey Iturrigaray (un personaje muy cercano a Godoy). Éste fue uno de los episodios más relevantes de la crisis de legitimidad que agitaba entonces al Imperio hispano en ambos