

rural life, forever abolishing the myth that the region's history was exclusively shaped by wild gauchos and almighty semi-feudal landlords.

Florida International University
Miami, Florida

VICTOR M. URIBE-URAN

Crime and Punishment in Latin America. Edited by Ricardo D. Salvatore, Carlos Aguirre, and Gilbert M. Joseph. Durham: Duke University Press, 2001. Pp. xxiv, 448. Notes. Index. \$65.95 cloth; \$21.95 paper.

Any attempt to do justice in a short review to the complexity and richness of this book would be an exercise in futility. Fortunately, interested scholars and graduate students cramming for exams can turn to the editors' preface and introduction for historiographical background on the study of crime and punishment in Latin America, concise contextualizations of the edited volume's thirteen essays, and a thorough overview of pending questions in an exciting "new" field of historical inquiry. For novice and initiate alike, these two introductory essays with their admirable balance of concise synthesis (of past trends) and cautious prediction (about future directions) are a godsend. This careful approach is especially welcome because, as Gilbert Joseph's preface informs us, "the law is one of those domains that joins the state and society, one that invites the study of connections between broad structural changes and alterations in the character of political, social, and cultural life" (p. xii); thus, its study significantly advances "our understanding of the often paradoxical and contingent nature of modernization from the perspective of state, elite, and subaltern actors" (p. xvii). With so much at stake, the importance of a solid grounding is uncontested. And, in a time of often acrimonious academic debates about the "cultural turn" in Latin American history, this new scholarship reminds us that these advances in understanding are more likely to come through collective effort and from diverse methodological and theoretical approaches than through disciplinary in-fighting.

Given the complexity of this emerging field, the volume's most important immediate contribution is the introductory essay by Carlos Aguirre and Ricardo Salvatore, "Writing the History of Law, Crime, and Punishment in Latin America." This essay provides the best review to date of the historical literature on crime and punishment in Latin America from the *historia del derecho* of traditional legal scholars, to liberal narratives of legal progress (including lamentations over its continued failures), to Marxist class-based critiques of capitalist legal structures to Foucauldian investigations into discourses, institutions, and power relations, to subaltern studies of legal practices "in which the rules of the game are themselves subject to negotiation, dispute, manipulation, and corruption" (p. 16). While clearly in sympathy with the subaltern studies project, Aguirre and Salvatore rightly insist on the heuristic value of a multi-faceted approach. Nearly two centuries of *historia del derecho*, for example, has left gaping holes in our historical understanding of basic legal and institutional structures in many parts of Latin America. A concluding "agenda for future research" (more work on popular justice, the colonial legal legacy, everyday

legal practices, law as ideology, women and the law, the impact of penal institutions, etc.) gives some indication of the immensity of the task at hand.

Sandwiched between these past and future agendas, Aguirre and Salvatore include a brief but penetrating critique of contemporary analysts of Latin American legal systems who insist “on testing Latin American cases against a certain ideal type of situation (total equality before the law) that has never existed and probably never will.” “Instead of an impossible system of rule of law,” they argue, “we would prefer to refer to regimes that achieve (or do not achieve) the hegemony of law, that is to say, a political or institutional regime in which a substantial portion of the litigants and people under legal processes understand and abide by the procedures and institutions designed by lawmakers and judges . . . [and through which] people valorize the legal order as a component of their social and civic identity and exercise of rights” (p. 15). Commonsense perhaps, but good advice that is too often ignored in the rush to explain Latin America’s seemingly interminable state of crisis, as if healthy suspicion and even hearty contempt of police corruption and bureaucratic obfuscation *necessarily* reflect systemic failure.

Thirteen articles and a provocative afterward by Douglas Hay are intended to “showcase a sample of some of the best scholarship.” They accomplish that and more. As in most edited volumes some essays are stronger than others, but the overall quality is remarkably high. Limited space precludes a review of individual contributions. Read together, however, they give some indication of the diversity and sophistication of current historical scholarship on crime and punishment in Latin America. The editors’ division of the articles into three sections (Legal Mediations, The Social and Cultural Construction of Crime, Contested Meanings of Punishment) grouped by both subject matter and methodological orientation, supports their advocacy of an eclectic approach. Articles in the first section (Charles Walker, Arlene Díaz, Juan Manuel Palacios, Luis González) demonstrate the power of good, old-fashioned social history to reveal the complex workings of criminal justice in specific historical circumstances. Those from the second section (Cristina Rivera-Garza, Dain Borges, Kristin Ruggiero, Pablo Piccato) deploy the “cultural turn” to explore the many connections between elites discourses, social engineering, and legal practice across the turn of the last century, a period of consolidation in the development of modern Latin American nation-states. Those from the third (Diana Paton, Ricardo Salvatore, Carlos Aguirre, Donna Guy, Lila Caimari) combine social history and the cultural turn in order to engage the practices and discursive effects of different punishments from whippings to incarceration to execution. Judging from this sample, it would be premature (if not criminal) to push for a unified methodology (along the lines of the final “hybrid” section, for example). The lack of a common approach and by extension the inability to generate a master narrative reflects not the inadequate state of historical studies but the unresolved and perhaps irresolvable contradictions in the post-independence liberal nation-building project.

As might be expected from one of crime and punishments most influential historians, Hay’s afterward, “Law and Society in Comparative Perspective,” is suggestive

in its comparisons (especially to developments in Great Britain and its colonies) and challenging in its critique of the limitations of current scholarship. Especially appropriate is his suggestion that Latin American historians be more attentive to the links among economic ideologies, markets, and social control. Recent market failures in Mexico (1995) and Argentina (2002), for example, have produced significant increases in high profile crimes like “express” kidnapping, classic “moral panics,” and “great fears” of social dissolution. The connection can hardly be coincidental.

Bowling Green State University
Bowling Green, Ohio

ROBERT BUFFINGTON

Café, sociedad y relaciones de poder en América Latina. Edited by Mario Samper K., William Roseberry, and Lowell Gudmundson. Heredia, Costa Rica: Editorial Universidad Nacional, 2001.

This book is a Spanish translation of *Coffee, Society and Power in Latin America* (Baltimore, 1995) updated with two essays by Mario Samper K. The works in this excellent collection cap a significant body of scholarly work that links the rapid expansion of export agriculture in the long nineteenth century to state formation in Latin America. Departing from the grand generalizations of dependency theory and world systems, these essays stress diversity of outcome and listen carefully to the ways in which each specific coffee region resonated differently to the plucking of the same string in the international economy.

In Fernando Picó’s description of a small Puerto Rican region, generational change, migration, cultural attitudes to land, and different access to credit account for the dynamics of land tenure changes. The contribution by Verena Volcke brings our attention to the importance of family dynamics and gender roles to understand the strategies behind diverse labor arrangements. David McCreery finds that ethnicity, geographical location, and demographic change, rather than who was in power, explain the end of coercive labor arrangements in Guatemala. That is, the careful case studies in this volume show the variety of factors and the complex negotiations, implicit and explicit, that gave the institutions of the coffee economy their shape and their plasticity.

Chapters by Héctor Pérez Brignoli (on the participation of Indian communities in the 1932 “Matanza” in El Salvador), Mauricio Font (on the politics of Italian immigrants in San Paulo), Lowell Gudmundson (on the role of small coffee producers in the 1948 Costa Rican revolution), and Michael Jiménez (on the relative lack of influence of coffee planters in Colombia), bring home the point that the study of collective action and political change in the respective regions also benefits from a more nuanced understanding of the coffee economy and the social groups that participated in it. Michael Jiménez further explores the limits of the power of planters in an excellent contribution on the United States side of the coffee market. His analysis of the business of roasting and distribution illuminates the reasons why Latin American producers never realized their dreams of sidestepping the middlemen.