

author reminds us that Spanish law was based on Roman law, plus elements added by the Visigoths and Moslems. In Spain, in practice, the administration of justice was vested chiefly in municipal *alcaldes*. Occasionally the crown sent agents to investigate administration in local areas. And in 1474 Isabella established the *santa hermandad* and empowered its *alcaldes* to enter private homes in search of criminals.

After the Spanish conquests in America, intermixture of the races led to the caste system; and codes relevant to the Indies consistently discriminated against the lower classes. Spain extended the *audiencia* to her colonies, and divided it into two *salas*, civil and criminal (*sala del crimen*). Agents of the latter hunted down delinquents and brought them before the *alcaldes del crimen*. But these agents were territorially limited; they could not catch bandits who escaped into other districts. The *sala del crimen* could not cope with crime waves, particularly in times of disaster.

In 1722 Viceroy Marqués de Valero made an agreement with the *audiencia* to establish the *acordada*—a word derived from *con acuerdo* (with agreement)—with power to apprehend bandits and bring them to justice. It had unlimited territorial jurisdiction; by the 1780s it was handling four-fifths of all criminal cases in the viceroyalty. Undoubtedly it was an improvement over other judicial bodies. It functioned effectively until 1812 when its operations conflicted with the constitution then promulgated.

The book is based on original sources in the AGN in Mexico City and on the best printed works. It is an excellent production in all respects.

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*New Spain: The Birth of Modern Mexico.* By NICOLAS CHEETHAM. London, 1974. Victor Gollancz. Maps. Illustrations. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 336. Cloth. \$15.00.

Written by a former British ambassador to Mexico, this book is a history of sixteenth-century New Spain which will appeal more to the general reader than to the scholar. The author devotes two chapters to a general survey of the major pre-Columbian civilizations, follows with the military and spiritual conquests, and closes with the final establishment of an orderly social and political system toward the end of the sixteenth century, although there is a decreasing amount of information on the events and society of the end of the century. The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries are impressionistically com-

pressed in one last chapter. It is debatable to see the birth of Mexico as a nation (part of the title) confined to the sixteenth century alone, disregarding two hundred years more of change and development.

Cheetham's main interest is the physical and cultural confrontation and interaction between Indians and Spaniards. As a consequence, he dwells on certain aspects of the conquest and on the following deeds of such figures as Pedro de Gante, Vasco de Quiroga and Bernardino de Sahagún. He also surveys such issues as the education of the Indians, the encomienda system and the controversy over a just system of government for the indigenous population. He highlights the accomplishments of the evangelizing friars for whom he has an obvious admiration. His treatment of the relationship between the regular orders and Indians is sympathetic and on the whole satisfying. However, the intellectual interaction between some outstanding friars and their protégées is not enough to give a complete picture of the role of the Church in New Spain. Such an important event as the Third Mexican Council of 1585 is not even mentioned.

This work falls short of being a complete or balanced history of New Spain. The author has focused on well-known topics without adding any new interpretations or considering the most recent historical revisions or bibliographical additions to the literature. For example, he adopts Morley's concept of an old and new Maya empires, an interpretation which has been rejected by contemporary archeologists. The bibliography misses the works of Benedict Warren, Donald Chipman, Robert Padden, Richard Greenleaf and Charles Braden, to name a few. There is no attempt to incorporate discussions on economic issues, urban development or demographic problems. There are no footnotes. In spite of these shortcomings, the writer spins his narrative with accomplished grace and facility. His ability to convey a sufficiently sound historical account in an elegant and most readable style recommends this book to the interested but non-academic audience.

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*Sixteenth-Century Mexico: The Work of Sahagún.* Edited by MUNRO S. EDMONSON. Foreword by DOUGLAS W. SCHWARTZ. Albuquerque, 1974. University of New Mexico Press. Illustrations. Tables. Figures. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xv, 292. Cloth. \$15.00.

*Sixteenth-Century Mexico: The Work of Sahagún* is a collection of eleven articles which center around the life and times of the six-