EXPANDING THE BOUNDARIES OF Imperial brazil

Marshall C. Eakin Vanderbilt University

- CITIZEN EMPEROR: PEDRO II AND THE MAKING OF BRAZIL, 1825–1891. By Roderick J. Barman. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999. Pp. 548. \$55.00 cloth.)
- CAMPANHA GAUCHA, A BRAZILIAN RANCHING SYSTEM, 1840–1920. By Stephen Bell. (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1999. Pp. 292. \$55.00 cloth.)
- POWER, PATRONAGE, AND POLITICAL VIOLENCE: STATE BUILDING ON A BRAZILIAN FRONTIER, 1822–1889. By Judy Bieber. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999. Pp. 253. \$45.00 cloth.)
- ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY BRAZIL: THE FORMATION OF A BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT. By Sérgio de Oliveira Birchal. (New York: St. Martin's, 1999. Pp. 233. \$65.00 cloth.)
- THE BRAZILIAN EMPIRE: MYTHS AND HISTORIES. Revised edition. By Emília Viotti da Costa. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000. Pp. 320. \$16.95 paper.)

Nineteenth-century Brazil was a fascinating place. In the aftermath of the wars for independence across the Americas, Brazil alone succeeded in constructing a viable monarchy among the new republics that emerged from the United States south to Argentina. Brazil was a vast territory on paper, but in reality the central government in Rio de Janeiro exerted a loose authority over a series of population clusters from the mouth of the Amazon to Rio Grande do Sul. With the prominent exception of Minas Gerais (the most populous province), all major centers of power and more than 90 percent of all Brazilians were found within a hundred miles of the Atlantic coast. In many ways, the map of Brazil was a fiction that did not become a reality until late in the twentieth century. Even in the coastal provinces, rebellions against the central government were rife, especially before 1850. Prior to the rise of academic history in universities in Brazil, the United States, and Europe, the history of nineteenth-century Brazil was largely written from the center and covered mainly the power centers of the Northeast and Southeast from the perspective of politics, especially high politics. Over the past thirty years, attention has shifted away from the Brazilian Empire, and

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the history of the twentieth century too often has dominated the writing of Brazilian history, especially among historians in the United States.

The five books under review here all deal primarily with the nineteenth century. In one way or another, each work sheds light on the making and unmaking of the Brazilian Empire. They range from a more traditional perspective of high politics, the Court, and the Emperor, to politics in small towns on the frontier of the empire, to entrepreneurship and economic development on the fringe, to the geographical underpinnings on the fringe, to essays on the political and social history of the empire. These works also exemplify the array of scholars interested in nineteenth-century Brazil. One volume was written by an Englishman who has made his academic career in Canada, one by a Canadian with an academic position in the United States, and another by a young U.S. historian trained by an Englishman who has made his career in the United States. The remaining two volumes were written by Brazilians: one trained in England, and the other an eminent Brazilian historian trained in Brazil and France who has spent much of her academic life in the United States. The intellectual production of the history of Brazil is truly an international enterprise.

Biography has been a genre rarely practiced by historians of Latin America in any language (in contrast to the seemingly insatiable demand for biographies in the United States). Pedro II was indisputably one of the most important historical figures in all of the Americas in the nineteenth century. Yet until now, his life has been recounted only in a handful of generally old and admiring biographies in English, while the last notable biographies in Portuguese date back to the 1930s. Roderick Barman has spent most of his life working on nineteenth-century Brazil, and his Citizen Emperor: Pedro II and the Making of Brazil, 1825–1891 along with a companion volume on Princess Isabel bring together his formidable knowledge of archives and sources to construct a fascinating and detailed portrayal of Pedro de Alcântara João Carlos Leopoldo Salvador Bibiano Francisco Xavier de Paula Leocádio Miguel Gabriel Rafael Gonzaga de Bragança e Borbon. In an era of postmodernism and cultural history, Barman's work follows a traditional approach. It is unabashedly a biography of an elite figure and a history of elite politics—a life and times study of the Brazilian emperor.¹

Barman appears to have completed an exhaustive survey of primary and secondary materials on Pedro II. Barman enjoyed access to the private correspondence and diaries of Pedro and many members of his family (the book is dedicated to Pedro II's great-grandson). This definitive portrait will no doubt remain the standard work on Pedro II for a long time to come. Despite his obvious admiration and respect for Pedro, Barman draws a compelling portrait of a distant, introspective, and aloof ruler whose con-

^{1.} In early 2002, the Conference on Latin American History (CLAH) awarded the prestigious Bolton Prize for the best book on Latin American history to *Citizen Emperor*.

trolling personality made him a strong leader and unifier of his nation before the 1860s and a figure who increasingly divided Brazilian elites in the 1870s and 1880s. Pedro's character made the monarchy essential to the nation in the first half of his reign but then made this form of government increasingly outmoded in the second half. Barman portrays Pedro clearly: "Resourceful, patient, and above all persevering, he eschewed bold initiatives and avoided confrontations" (p. xiv). He helped provide Brazil with a stability nearly unparalleled in the rest of the Americas. Rather than rule, Pedro managed the politics of his country by helping to consolidate a political system with clear rules and "avenues of advancement, agreed methods of negotiation, and known boundaries of acceptable action" (p. xiv). Barman asserts that Pedro set a standard "by virtue of his personal character, behavior, and interests . . . [and] created a model of citizenship which commanded both respect abroad and acceptance at home" (p. xiv). Barman argues that this "ideal of citizenship" survived long after the overthrow of monarchy, at least until the military coup of 1964. Although Pedro assuredly played a central role in constructing a political culture in the nineteenth century, many elements of that political culture-personalism, patronage, clientelism, and corporatism—were common to all of Latin America. In my view, these features of the political culture are what have survived and indeed thrived long past 1889, not Pedro's ideal of citizenship.

Barman traces Pedro's character features and flaws to his extraordinary upbringing. Virtually orphaned at the age of five and raised by a series of tutors, Pedro lost his beloved older sisters as teenagers to dynastic marriages. The boy learned early in life to be introspective and emotionally guarded and to keep his own counsel. The political turmoils of Brazil in the 1830s and 1840s as well as the efforts of Liberals and Conservatives to court and control the young man also taught him how to seek advice and to build respectful relationships with powerful figures but to avoid investing himself emotionally in these relationships. Even his most intimate relationships with his siblings, his wife, his children, and his mistresses—were always guarded and careful.

Perhaps the most interesting and important of these relationships was with his daughter Isabel, the Crown Princess. In some of the most revealing sections of *Citizen Emperor*, Barman shows Pedro's unwillingness to accept Isabel's ability to succeed him because he could never believe that a woman was capable of ruling. Conversely, Isabel never developed confidence in her own abilities, despite serving on three occasions as regent during her father's travels to Europe and North America (in 1871–1872, 1876, and 1888). In the 1880s, as Pedro's health declined and the inevitability of succession loomed large, the public perception of Isabel as a weak heir, combined with an intense dislike for her even weaker French husband, helped erode support for the monarchy. Just as Pedro had served as a powerful symbol of unity, monarchy, and patriarchy in the 1840s, the looming succession

of Isabel proved a powerful argument for continuing unity and patriarchy, but under a republican government. Barman's *Citizen Emperor* is a masterful portrait of Pedro II that provides a richly documented study of elites, high politics, and the Court in nineteenth-century Brazil.

Judy Bieber's monograph could not be more different in perspective from Barman's. She seeks to reorient the way historians look at imperial politics and state-building by viewing them from the periphery toward the center. In *Power, Patronage, and Political Violence: State Building on a Brazilian Frontier, 1822–1889,* the frontier shapes the center rather than vice versa. In a way, her book follows U.S. Congressman Tip O'Neill's famous maxim, "All politics is local." Rather than turning to the traditional archives in Rio de Janeiro and the correspondence of the imperial court, Bieber mined the rich local archives on what was the frontier in nineteenth-century Minas Gerais, the São Francisco region in the north of the most populous Brazilian province. Bieber examines three towns near the headwaters of the Rio São Francisco: São Romão, Januária, and Montes Claros. From studying the politics of these three frontier towns, she gauges responses to the growth of central power emanating out from Rio de Janeiro.

Bieber depicts a world of endemic political violence after the mid-1800s. Her great contribution in *Power, Patronage, and Political Violence* is her argument that this political violence was a result of political centralization, not its cause: "Local corruption and violence were not products of rural isolationism but stemmed from regional integration into a system of national electoral politics that encouraged and even institutionalized such abuses" (p. 2). Local politics moved from reliance on kinship networks and community to party patronage at the state and national levels. The national government increasingly acted to control local politics through political appointments and patronage. According to Bieber, "The Brazilian state managed to graft party politics onto a preexisting system based on kinship ties and personal loyalty" (p. 153). The more successful Rio de Janeiro and the emperor became at extending their power into the countryside, the greater the corruption and violence at the local level. So much for Barman's "ideal of citizenship."

Bieber also illustrates how subalterns and the too often forgotten peoples of the interior of Brazil and Latin America participated in and shaped the larger process of nation building and nationalism. In many respects, *Power, Patronage, and Political Violence* represents the corrective and complement to Barman's biography. In *Citizen Emperor*, Pedro II and the powerful figures of the Court created and shaped the emerging Brazilian nation. Pedro hoped to create citizens of a modern nation instructed by an enlightened elite. From the vantage point of the frontier of northern Minas Gerais, in contrast, the folk of the interior "became citizens of a modern state, not subjects of a patriarchal emperor" (p. 204). Ultimately, Pedro and his subjects engaged in a political tug-of-war in which the state succeeded in extending its power into the interior, but the Brazilians in the interior succeeded in shaping the formation of political structures and processes in ways that Pedro never anticipated. *Power, Patronage, and Political Violence* will broaden and deepen historians' vision of the Brazilian Empire and will force readers to rethink politics and decenter the political history of the empire.

Sérgio de Oliveira Birchal's Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Brazil: The Formation of a Business Environment provides another view from the fringe of the empire, once again from Minas Gerais. This monograph began as a dissertation under the direction of Colin Lewis at the University of London. Birchal turns readers' attention from politics to the history of business, a topic sorely neglected in Brazil and all of Latin America. Despite the ferocious debate over the power of business elites (both foreign and national) in Latin America over the last forty years, the history of business has been virtually ignored by scholars. Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Brazil offers a richly detailed look at four industries and key entrepreneurs in nineteenth-century Minas Gerais (the title is misleading in its seemingly more national scope). The book is divided into four parts. The first chapter briefly surveys the economic and business environment in nineteenth-century Brazil and Minas Gerais. The other three parts focus on entrepreneurs, firms, and technology. Birchal concentrates on four industries: textiles, iron and steel, road building, and electric power generation.

Birchal's composite analysis shows that Mineiro entrepreneurs came primarily from landholding elite families and that the capital for early firms in the textile and the iron and steel industries emerged from kinship networks. Nearly all the important entrepreneurs were locally born, with few immigrants, unlike the business communities in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Perhaps most striking, Birchal demonstrates how backward Minas was in comparison with these two powerful "coastal centers." Mineiro firms were smaller, less capitalized, and less technologically sophisticated than those in Rio and São Paulo. What makes this "underdevelopment" even more striking is the fact that Minas occupied a more central and favored position in the empire than most other Brazilian provinces.

Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Brazil points out the primary obstacles to business and economic development in nineteenth-century Brazil. It also shows that not all economic and business history took place in the São Paulo–Rio de Janeiro axis. In this sense, this study resembles Bieber's book. Birchal's work highlights the need for studies of business leaders and the business history of other regions outside the main corridor of power and historiography. Just as historians cannot understand the politics of the empire by focusing on the court and the emperor, we will not comprehend the nature of the empire without studying business history at both the periphery and the center.

Stephen Bell, a Canadian geographer at the University of California, Los Angeles, provides a view from yet another fringe of the Brazilian empire. *Campanha Gaúcha, a Brazilian Ranching System, 1840–1920* keeps alive a venerable tradition of historical geography dating back to Carl Sauer at Berkeley and the 1930s.² A region of "rolling hills" in the southwestern section of Rio Grande do Sul (the southernmost state in Brazil), the Campanha forms the geographical and ecological focus of a "ranching system." Bell traces the modernization of the Campanha grasslands, showing that it paralleled the transformation of the Argentine and Uruguayan pampas but lagged behind them. In a sense, the Campanha lies on the periphery of two core regions, Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires. Like Bieber's municipalities in the north of Minas, the towns and villages of the Campanha have been largely overlooked and understudied. *Campanha Gaúcha* analyzes the transformation of the grasslands of southern Brazil in the 1850s into a reasonably complex and sophisticated agricultural system by the 1920s. The work offers strong parallels with the classic work of Warren Dean on the coffee plantation system in Rio Claro (Dean 1976).

Bell's *Campanha Gaúcha* contributes to the revival of modernization theory, the dominant paradigm in the social sciences in the 1950s and 1960s before coming under heavy siege from dependency and other theories. Reviled in the 1970s for its unilinear and North Atlantic bias, modernization theory has made a strong comeback with the collapse of socialism and the seemingly near universal triumph of capitalism. As economists and economic historians rush to explain "why Latin America fell behind" (Haber 1997) and to enumerate "the obstacles to change" (Véliz 1965), some Latin Americanists may have a strange sense of "déjà vu all over again." *Campanha Gaúcha* skillfully traces the slow and steady incorporation of the region into the great ranching complex of southern South America and the Atlantic economy by 1920.

Sparsely settled in the 1850s, Rio Grande do Sul contained less than two hundred thousand inhabitants. Yet by 1920, the population has surged to more than 2 million. By the 1850s, many head of cattle grazed on the Campanha, as described in Bell's fine chapter on "the gaúchos and their grasslands." As in Argentina, the most successful ranchers in the mid-nineteenth century "were those who came to the business with management skills and with access to development capital" (p. 59). The Brazilian ranchers in the interior operated at a disadvantage to those near the coast, who had access to markets outside the region from Rio de Janeiro to Bahia and Cuba. Already in the mid-nineteenth century, Brazilian ranchers were slaughtering a half-million cattle each year for their hides and grease and to produce sundried salt beef known as *charque*. Modernizing ranchers formed organizations and associations to promote innovation in all aspects of ranching. They published journals, organized exhibitions, helped write rural codes, and lobbied politicians at the state and national levels.

The most important innovation and "the primary index of change"

2. Campanha Gaúcha won the CLAH Bolton Prize in 1999.

was the improvement of livestock through importing and selective breeding. With the emergence of specialized export markets, the importance of quality beef overshadowed the demand for hides and salt beef. Hereford gradually became the dominant breed of cattle, and Brazilian ranchers turned increasingly to raising sheep for wool. But unlike the Río de la Plata region, cattle continued to outnumber sheep in the early twentieth century—some 8.5 million cattle compared with 4.5 million sheep. As happened on the plains across the Americas, fencing the land became a foremost symbolic act of modernization. Fencing with barbed wire seems to have accelerated in the Campanha in the 1880s. It represented an increasing centralization of control over the land and a powerful threat to the traditional way of life of the gaúchos. As Bell underscores, innovation was often resisted by Brazilian ranchers and moved at a slower pace than in Argentina and Uruguay.

The great transition from "charqueada to frigorífico" (from salted to refrigerated beef) was central to modernization in the late-nineteenth century. The abolition of slavery and the building of railways in the later 1880s helped open up the Campanha and end the long dominance of the coastal zone in the cattle business. Bell points to three key changes that propelled modernization: "the transformation of the salt-beef plants to operation on an industrial scale; the export of animals on the hoof to Britain; and, most importantly, the introduction of refrigeration technology" (p. 137). In a chapter titled "The Slow Path of Modernization," Bell examines the obstacles to change that slowed the diffusion of economic modernity and the "spread effects" of modernization in the two core regions around Rio de Janeiro and Buenos Aires. Rio Grande do Sul lay on the periphery of two competing metropolitan centers; it had poor port facilities; the grasslands environment was less rich and favorable than the grasslands of Argentina and Uruguay; and foreign (especially British) investment was small to nonexistent. In Rio Grande do Sul (as in Minas Gerais), foreign entrepreneurs were rare, especially in comparison with the Río de la Plata region (Buenos Aires and Montevideo) and southeastern Brazil (Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo). More important, like many of the "new institutional economists," Bell emphasizes the lack of well-defined rules and codes, especially the lack of clarity in property rights. A weak central state and strong landowners hindered the development of a strong and clearly defined set of property rights. Many economists would argue that poorly defined property rights continue to hinder contemporary economic development in Brazil.

Bell's fine book, like those of Bieber and Birchal, will help reorient Brazilianists' view of the empire by providing another perspective from the periphery. On this frontier of the Brazilian Empire, as in Minas, political and economic "modernization" moved forward unevenly with pressure from the core and was shaped by specific local conditions and peoples. In Rio Grande do Sul and the Campanha, economic modernization had transformed the grasslands of the interior by the 1920s, although the region lagged behind the grasslands in Uruguay and Argentina. Again, however, scholars must keep the "underdevelopment" of this "periphery" in perspective. Like Minas Gerais, Rio Grande do Sul may have been less modernized than the powerful metropolitan centers, but it was one of the more developed regions of Brazil by the 1920s.

Emília Viotti da Costa's *The Brazilian Empire: Myths and Histories* is quite unlike the other four works reviewed here. This series of essays originated in her pioneering work in the 1960s and 1970s, primarily *Da monarquia à república* (1977). *The Brazilian Empire* first appeared in English in 1985 and has now been republished by the University of North Carolina Press with an essay on women that did not appear in the 1985 edition. The fact that this book has been republished once again and is still widely used and cited testifies to the enduring quality of Viotti da Costa's insights and the significance of her work. Her analyses of the ambiguity, flexibility, and hypocrisy of Brazilian liberalism, of land-tenure policies, of the transition from slavery to free labor, and of Gilberto Freyre's notion of "racial democracy" in Brazil (written decades ago) have become standard interpretative themes in the field.

Viotti da Costa's work has also examined both elites and masses in a style of social history that remains vital to understanding of the Brazilian Empire. Recently retired from the faculty at Yale University, Viotti da Costa has achieved a huge impact on the field of Brazilian and Latin American history, mentoring a bevy of outstanding historians who will continue to have major impact on the history of Latin America from Mexico to Central America to Chile and Brazil. Republication of this fine pioneering work is a fitting tribute to a historian who has helped transform the history of the Brazilian Empire and the history of Latin America over the past four decades.

Together, these five books point out to historians that we should pay more attention to the Brazilian Empire even as we move into the twentyfirst century. These authors have all expanded our understanding of the empire. In particular, they remind us that we need to readjust our vision of the empire by focusing more on the frontiers, fringes, and peripheries. Big questions about nineteenth-century Brazil remain troubling and puzzling, although only a few can be named here. How did the old colony manage to remain intact as the Spanish American possessions fragmented? In a country that seemed on the surface so peaceful, why was there so much violence in nearly every region? What was the nature of the relationships of Brazilian elites and masses, center and peripheries, regions and center in the formation of the nation-state? The answers to these questions are almost as cloudy today as they were a half-century ago, and they will not be better understood until we expand the political, economic, and cultural boundaries of the empire to include the vast regions outside the Rio de Janeiro-São Paulo axis. These books all make important contributions to expanding those boundaries and reorienting our vision of nineteenth-century Brazil.

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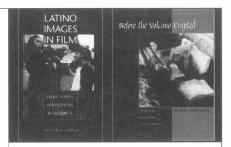
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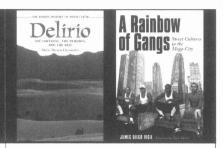
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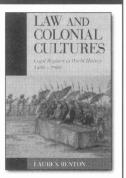
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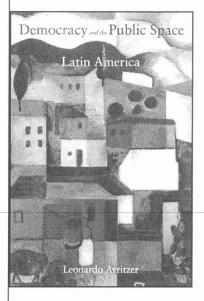
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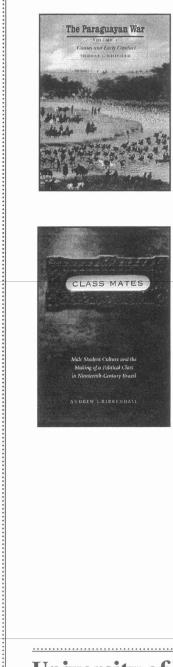
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