

position for Lockridge when he attacks Bailyn's second proposition that public schools and literacy led to a modernization of attitudes. Lockridge tests the modernization of attitudes by the dubious method of seeing if public charity, or what he calls "rehabilitative giving", increased along with literacy. He presumes that if charity to institutions increased then men would be showing modern attitudes. Since Lockridge finds that "rehabilitative giving" did not increase, colonial men were not becoming modernized. Few will accept the logic of this test but more importantly other variables did not remain constant. From Lockridge's own previous work and from the work of many other recent historians, we know that eighteenth-century New England was becoming an over-crowded society, short on land and long on bankruptcies where fathers were having an increasingly difficult time providing for their adult children. Under these economic conditions it would be miraculous for the overall rate of giving to charities to rise.

By de-emphasizing modernization Lockridge wants to remind us that seventeenth-century New Englanders lived closer to the "credulous word-of-mouth world of the peasant" and that schools and literacy did not fundamentally change the region into a forward looking society. While supplying a larger perspective on New England as an insular traditional peasant society, Lockridge ignores the fact that the very force of Puritanism that he believes to be so important to an understanding of the educational impulse tended to involve the villager in a wider world. After all, the typical villager heard a learned minister speak at least twice a week and was involved in elections and government that went beyond the village confines. He may not have been a learned man himself or a major officeholder but the tribalism of Puritanism involved him in a community that spanned all of New England and extended to England. Local ties were probably a New Englander's most important ones but he could not have been as insular as Lockridge suggests.

Probably the best service this book provides for the historical profession, besides interesting reading and fuel for journal pages and graduate seminars, is that it puts the Puritan back in Puritan New England and reminds us that, in his goals at least, the Puritan looked backward not forward. In particular the emphasis on the continued religiosity of the eighteenth-century is welcome because too many historians distracted by the contentiousness of eighteenth-century man and blinded by the secular Revolution later in the century fail to realize that New England was still fundamentally a religious society shaped by Puritan precepts.

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MARY W. HELMS. — *Middle America: a Cultural History of Heartland and Frontiers.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J., : Prentice-Hall, 1975.

The "cultural history" referred to in the title of this work has to be understood in its anthropological sense. That is to say, it has to do at once with ethnohistory and socioeconomic history. Those elements of political history which intrude serve merely to explain some of the priorities to which the development of Middle America has responded.

Any work of this type is necessarily reminiscent of Eric Wolf's *Sons of the Shaking Earth*. While it cannot be said that this author has matched Wolf's felicity of style (indeed this is in that respect a most textbookish textbook), she has nevertheless produced a most worthy successor to a valuable teaching aid.

Since 1959, when Wolf's work was first published, our knowledge of Middle America has deepened considerably. Nowhere is this more obvious as in that section of the book devoted to the pre-Columbian period. Benefitting, as she does, from recent scholarship Helms

is not only able to revise Wolf's treatment of the Mayas and Aztecs, but also provides an interesting discussion of more peripheral civilized peoples and successfully integrates them with the two main-line civilizations. She also discusses the non-urbanized populations to the north and south of the Mesoamerican core. It is this treatment of the pre-Colombian period which is the most valuable section of the book as it brings within the reach of a non-specialized audience the recent scholarly literature in the field.

Her treatment of the colonial period is somewhat less successful. Her discussion of rural society is compelling enough, and she manages to avoid some of the more extreme conclusion which are often drawn from the works of Black Legendists. Even here, however, Helm's account of the fate of the Indian communities is overly brief. On the less positive side, her treatment of urban society is shallow. The mechanism whereby took place the transfer of Iberian society to the New World, and European techniques to the Indians, are inadequately broached. It all results from too traditional a view as to what the immediate post-conquest Spanish colonial society was like. It was certainly more entrepreneurial and less monolithic in its aristocratic character than she would have us believe.

Even more significantly there is an inadequate presentation of the economic history of the area. The seventeenth century is here simply an era of depression and the eighteenth one of growth. Such simplification precludes any meaningful evaluation of the impact of Middle America's changing relations with Europe on the fate of the Indians of the region. This despite the fact that in the work of such scholars as Bakewell, Hamnett, and Taylor we have a good deal of evidence on the subject. On the more positive side, her discussion of the southern periphery of the region is unique in a work of this kind, and quite welcomed.

Helm's treatment of the national period has weaknesses and strengths. Her discussion of the lowland areas of Central America brings light to bear on a region too often ignored, and her treatment of the fate of the rural Indian communities at the hands of nineteenth century liberals, although brief, is quite well done. The same can be said of her presentation of more recent phenomena such as the Mexican Revolution. Unfortunately, the relation between these changes and the participation of Middle America in the world economy is never explored.

It is clear from her discussion of the entire postconquest period that she is far better informed on Mexico than on the rest of the area. This, however, is less a feature of the book than the existing historiography. It is too Helms' credit that she tries to balance the geographical bias of her sources by giving a good deal of space to the different social situations to be found in the various Central American countries. Her own particular expertise on the lowland areas of the eastern coast serves her very well here.

On balance this is not the kind of work which is likely to be entirely satisfactory to historians. As in the case of most anthropological treatments in dealing with the post-Columbian period this book concentrates entirely too much on the rural as opposed to the urban, the oppressed as opposed to the oppressors. Given the limitations of this type of work, however, this is quite a good textbook.

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ALAIN CROIX. — *Nantes et le pays nantais au XVI^e siècle: Étude démographique.* «Démographie et Société», XV. Paris: S.E.V.P.E.N., 1974.

During the last twenty-five or thirty years our knowledge of population movements in France over the last two centuries of the Ancien Régime has increased dramatically. By comparison the sixteenth century remains an enigma. Parish registers were not kept before the Council of Trent and the decision to require them was only slowly implemented.