

comparisons with other frontier regions in the overseas domains of the Spanish empire. The book is recommended for upper-level and graduate seminars.

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### BOURBON REFORMS IN MEXICO

*Viceroy Güemes's Mexico: Rituals, Religion and Revenue.* By Christoph Rosenmüller. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2024. Pp.272. \$95.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper; \$29.95 eBook.  
 doi:[10.1017/tam.2024.179](https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2024.179)

Christoph Rosenmüller's latest contribution is a straightforward commentary on an era through the life of a Mexican viceroy, Juan Francisco Güemes (1746–55). He carefully contextualizes Güemes's ascent to power, including his joining the army in 1700, fighting in Italy and North Africa and governing Havana, and joining the Council of War in 1763 after zealously promoting important reforms in the New World context.

As viceroy, his roles varied. As chief administrator and representative of the king of Spain and metropolis in Mexico, he served as an imperfect font of justice and protector of the native populations. In meticulous detail, Rosenmüller documents how Güemes secularized the Catholic Church to better control the regulars, replacing 109 *doctrinas* with parishes and bishop-controlled clergy. His account of the reform of the *alcabala* (sales tax) administration shows how the state gradually ended tax-farming and took over collection of the revenues, resulting in significant gains for the royal treasury. A review of the Guadalajara Treasury deduced corruption and also benefited the king's purse. The state's takeover of the silver mine of Bolaños ended with mixed results.

In addition, the imposition of all of these top-down, imposed reforms exposed the resistance of the clergy to the secularization, of the *consulado* over the *alcabala* changes, and of various *cabildos* (town councils) over the increasing centralization. Rosenmüller exposes the pervasive corruption that in the era sometimes was unremarkable as expected traditional practices, such as gift-giving in exchange for favoritism, patronage, and expedited paperwork. His analysis is particularly good on judicial wrangling and negotiation, corruption in the form of tax evasion and bribery and the apparent use of strawmen, outright fraud (in the administration of mercury sales), influence peddling, and collusion with friends and officials. Of personal interest is his brief but clear analysis of the Hat and Cloak rebellion as a reason behind the expulsion of the Jesuit order from the empire in 1767.

This book's most important overall point is that the so-called Bourbon reforms pre-date the administration of Charles III. The text is ripe for classroom use with an appendix with

short biographies of important actors in the story and a glossary. This is an elite story, which deepens our understanding of the period and builds on the author's previous work.

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CRIME AS A WINDOW ONTO PUBLIC HEALTH, DAILY LIFE, AND  
 BOURBON HEGEMONY

*Death in Old Mexico: The 1789 Dongo Murders and How They Shaped the History of a Nation.* By Nicole Von Germeten. Cambridge University Press, 2023. Figures. Tables. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 240. \$90.00 cloth; \$29.99 paper; \$29.99. doi:[10.1017/tam.2024.169](https://doi.org/10.1017/tam.2024.169)

Nicole Von Germeten's book is a beautiful fusion of innovative storytelling and meticulous archival research. On the night of October 23, 1789, near the Zócalo in Mexico City, three men burgled the resplendent mansion belonging to don Joaquin Dongo, a Novohispanic aristocrat and an important crown official. Armed with machetes, the robbers massacred Dongo, his brother-in-law, and nine employees of the estate. The bloodshed represented an unprecedented level of violence, which horrified the public as well as crown officials.

In short, accessible chapters, Von Germeten draws on an impressive range of sources to delineate contextual aspects of the story. She explores the setting (including at the level of the home's architecture), the viceroys involved (Bucareli y Ursúa, Mayorga, the Gálvez brothers, Flórez, and Revillagigedo), the structure of the *audiencia* and *acordada*, the witnesses' testimonies and the week-long investigation, and other aspects of the case, including the perspective of the friar who proffered spiritual care before the criminals were garroted. She also presents a fascinating discussion of the murderers' social worlds. The perpetrators, don Felipe Aldama, don Baltasar Dávila Quintero, and the younger don Joaquín Blanco, were all Spaniards who "lived as rogues, creeping around the edges of polite society" (104). Once honorable men, all three "passed their days conning and intimidating their friends and relatives, before eventually turning to theft, robbery, and murder" (106). One, Aldama, had been successful as a mine manager in Cuautla before becoming violent. There, he murdered his friend when struck with the urge to steal his bag of 2,000 pesos. Aldama confessed to this chilling crime only after having been convicted for the Dongo murders (114).

Von Germeten's story makes every effort to decenter these perplexingly cruel men. I particularly enjoyed her rigorously researched speculation on how the victims who worked in the home might have spent their last day of life. Because historians lack biographical data on the workers, their perspectives have been excluded from other accounts. One servant worked as a laundress, one as a messenger, and the other, a *galopina*. Four others "remain anonymous due to their lack of identification in the