

mission system. In this book, the missions are not the center of life in early California, which is a refreshing take.

The final two essays center on the culture in which Vallejo lived, looking at both his views of other Californios, the ranking members of Mexican era California who identified with their Spanish ancestors, and the role of family during that time. In many ways, Vallejo's memoir was a response to contemporary criticisms of Californios as uncultured and uneducated. According to the authors, he tried to explain the communal culture of the day, tie their customs and traditions back to a Europe that was largely perceived as more culturally sophisticated, and emphasize the attempts to build institutions of education in the state. The authors point out that many of the difficulties that early Californios encountered in establishing schools were due to a lack of potential teachers and political stability. The last chapter is largely comprised of family letters to and from Vallejo, a man who was often away from home. It reveals the increasing responsibilities for women in the household as well as the position the Vallejo family members found themselves in as they lost both wealth and status.

The value of this work is largely as a history of Alta California in the Spanish, Mexican, and early American eras. Much of this history is condensed in textbooks, and the military and political history is often overshadowed by the history of the mission system in typical course readings. Although the final two chapters on culture and family are largely limited to the ruling class of the region, the first six chapters do much to contextualize a history that for students often contains far too many unfamiliar figures, such as a seemingly endless parade of governors, who quickly fade from the scene. Helpful in that regard are illustrations and maps at relevant points as well as a thirty-two-page section of Biographical Sketches, offering paragraph-length entries for significant historical figures.

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## CHILE DURING THE AGE OF REVOLUTIONS

*The Age of Dissent: Revolution and the Power of Communication in Chile, 1780–1833.* By Martín Bowen. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2023. Pp 327. \$95.00 cloth; \$34.95 paper; \$95.00 e-book.  
 doi:10.1017/tam.2024.9

The bicentennial commemorations of Latin America Independence in the last fifteen years have opened new spaces of reflection, with the emergence of new scholarly works that analyzed the complexity of this process within the larger framework of the Age of Revolutions. Although there is consensus that the events of 1808 were catalysts for a

definitive imperial crisis, recent works have expanded the time framework to analyze earlier developments. These include a series of conspiracies and local mobilizations that challenged colonial rule and the development of a new political culture in the final decades of the eighteenth century. Martín Bowen's book is a timely and original contribution to this new body of literature, showing how diverse communities in the sparsely populated Spanish colony of Chile used a great variety of materials and communication modes to disrupt the unity and harmonious nature of colonial politics.

This book offers a fascinating history about the emergence and development of new forms of political participation in Chile during the Age of Revolutions. In this book, Bowen analyses a vast number of cases in which ordinary individuals, from diverse social-racial backgrounds, used innovative ways to exhibit their discontent, shape their disagreement, and expose contrary political views. As he explains in the introduction, what became revolutionary in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Chile was not the circulation of new radical ideas, but "the emergence of a profaned and pluralistic political landscape" (5), one in which people's dissenting actions disrupted traditional norms, "profaning the realm of politics and forcing it to embrace open expressions of division" (6). The display of division represents a key issue on Bowen's analysis of common practices of visibility and propagation; these two crucial modes of communication were used by Chileans to express their position, "contributing to the destabilization of all official claims to unanimity, turning visibility into a field for the contestation of legitimacy and making dissent an unavoidable dimension of political life" (81). Bowen shows that in Chile, the Age of Revolutions became, above all, the Age of Dissent.

Through seven elegantly written and beautifully illustrated chapters, Bowen offers a series of rich stories where symbols, material culture (flags, pins, rosettes, coins, cockades, portraits), gestures, and conversations turned into rich texts that individuals used and reused to express their contrasting ideas and positions as they built new political spaces for contestation and antagonism. Bowen offers a solid theoretical framework to connect communication acts to politics and, in this way, expands our understanding of communication to include a variety of modes that transcend the written word and orality: here, communication goes beyond an exchange of information to become a "site of contention" (8).

In the first four chapters, Bowen focus on "visibility" as a mode of communication that entailed the "publication" (manifestation, revelation) of people's antagonistic positions. The diverse ways in which people—especially plebeian subjects—made publicly visible their views prompted concerns among late eighteenth-century colonial officials who became obsessed with controlling dissent. By the first decade of the nineteenth century, however, the "political decomposition" and disunity of the Chileans was "public and evident" (21). The following three chapters of the book analyze "propagation" as a mode of communication that was embodied in different mimetic dynamics that spread

dissent, and the ways state officials tried to rule and discipline peoples' mimetic actions. Here, Bowen introduces the concept of the "mimetic public sphere" to demonstrate "that communication was understood as the propagation not of ideas or messages but of actions and behaviors" (144).

I would be hesitant to characterize the book as "the *first* detailed exploration of how ordinary actors in revolutionary Spanish America both produced and reacted to an antagonistic and profaned political landscape" (6); there is a rich Latin American scholarship that has analyzed what Elias Palti characterized as the fractious politics of nineteenth-century Latin America—expressed in a fragmented public opinion and contested political scenarios. However, I believe that Bowen makes a crucial contribution by offering an original and meticulous study of the profound connections that exist between communication and politics; he encourages us to look beyond the war of newspapers and pay close attention to how different groups exchanged gestures, behaviors, objects, and actions as they debated visions of their present and future realities.

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## POLICING, COURTS, AND PRISONS IN THE US SOUTHWEST

*Borders of Violence and Justice: Mexicans, Mexican Americans, and Law Enforcement in the Southwest, 1835–1935.* By Brian D. Behnken. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2022. Pp. 312. \$99.00 cloth; \$29.95 paper; \$22.99 e-book.  
 doi:10.1017/tam.2024.23

Brian Behnken presented a richly researched narrative about the history of policing, courts, and prisons in the US Southwest. In this book, he finds that Mexican-origin and Mexican American people were not merely victims of mob justice or brutal white supremacist organizations and their law enforcement enablers. Instead, Behnken shows how marginalized ethnic groups deployed different strategies to contest power in the borderlands, including becoming police officers themselves. Moreover, Behnken's research uncovers how this process did not begin with the professionalization of police departments during the mid-twentieth century, but rather was deeply rooted in the region's past. The author identifies compelling evidence dating to the mid-nineteenth century of the role of Mexican Americans participating in law enforcement as a means to protect their communities from white Anglo aggression in Texas and elsewhere.

Behnken draws on William Deverell's notion of the "unending Mexican war" to understand how after the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1848 formally ended hostilities with Mexico, a chaotic process of violent US colonization continued. The author shows that policing and law enforcement were embedded in this project, where