Thomas B. F. Cummins. Toasts with the Inca: Andean Abstraction and Colonial Images on Quero Vessels. (History, Languages, and Cultures of the Spanish and Portuguese Worlds.) Ann Ar...
in miasmas as the source of disease. But she makes clear that policy priorities were not shaped exclusively by scientific understandings. Throughout she challenges public health officials’ perceptions of themselves as apolitical and scientific, and in the epilogue she ventures a direct critique of these bright and dedicated men who, by dwelling on the benefits of the drainage system, “avoided confronting the social inequalities that prevailed in Mexico City and greatly contributed to the high incidence of disease and premature death” (p. 155).

Certainly officials’ concern with appearances served to legitimize their rule, and by emphasizing this concern, Agostoni successfully combines an analysis of two otherwise distinct aspects of the urban modernization project. She devotes a chapter to the construction of a series of statues and monuments along or near the Paseo de la Reforma, which cut through the modern, sanitized half of the city. The monuments commemo­rated key heroic figures, from the last Aztec emperor Cuauhtémoc to liberal reformer Benito Juárez, providing an official and linear version of national history. While the link of these monuments to issues of hygiene is not direct, the author presents the drainage project as part of a broader attempt by professionals and officials to construct, for a public of foreigners and nationals alike, an urban environment that “would prove that the narrative of progress had been fulfilled” (p. 156). Indeed, the drainage works became a tourist attraction and shared inaugural honors with new historical monuments at the 1910 centennial celebration.

Agostoni’s tentative findings for the post-1910 period fit well within recent postrevisionist studies of the revolution, suggesting both continuities and change. She suggests that, in the wake of a mass social uprising and the eventual acceptance of germ theory, postrevolutionary officials fretted more about the moral failures of the poor than about the cleanliness of the city itself. At the same time, they acknowledged Mexico City’s enormous inequalities as a key source of “social diseases.” She concludes by proposing a series of issues that historians of public health might explore, primarily for the postrevolutionary period. In sum, this study is an important contribution to our understanding of the Porfrian regime, the development of Mexico City, and the histories of science and medicine in Mexico.

JOHN LEAR
University of Puget Sound


This book is a long-awaited revision of Thomas B. F. Cummins’s Ph.D. dissertation in art history and is of great scholarly importance, notwithstanding its apparently narrow focus. It is a study of shifts in imagery on Andean quero and aquíllas vessels (ceremonial maize-beer drinking cups made respectively of wood and precious metals) from pre-Columbian times through the Spanish colonial period. Cummins mobilizes colonial documentary sources to link imagery on these vessels to the effects in social life, for Incas, for colonial caciques, and for colonial Spaniards, that ceremonial toasting with them was meant to achieve. He traces such connections in a remarkably readable and cogent argument illustrated with seventy-seven pages of black and white plates. A critical intervention on historical approaches to cultural mestizaje or hybridity in the colonial Andes, it joins the recent book by Carolyn Dean, Inka Bodies and the Body of Christ: Corpus Christi in Colonial Cuzco, Peru (1999), in making attention to art historical matters vital to historians of colonial worlds.

While imagery on beer drinking vessels might seem an arcane or even trivial matter for serious scholarship, Cummins shows how central was ceremonial sharing of maize beer in paired queros to Inca diplomacy and statecraft. Queros are then key to understanding how critically valued forms of sociality were given expression in the Andes before the Spanish invasion. He begins with a lively reconsideration of the encounter of Francisco Pizarro’s men and the Inca Atahualpa in Cajamarca. Textbook accounts of that ill-starred event focus on Atahualpa and “the book,” a breviary or Bible handed to him after explaining that it held the “word of God.” Holding it to his ear, he heard nothing, and dropped it to the ground, whereupon the signal was given to begin the notorious massacre. An account of the same event by later Inca heir Titu Cusi tells a different story, highlighting the centrality of toasts with queros to Inca political practice, in which the Inca’s refusal of the book follows the Spaniards’ rejection of the Inca’s proffer of one of a pair of chicha-filled queros.

Cummins’s central problem is a signal shift in the kinds of images incised and painted on queros, corresponding to the break between pre-Columbian and Spanish colonial contexts. Up to the 1570s, those images take the form of abstract geometric shapes associated with a ritual iconography. But queros produced by native artisans under Spanish rule within workshops in Spanish cities, are often covered in a new sort of pictorial representation, one that did not exist before: depictions of persons, mainly Inca nobles, engaged in ritual action. Cummins addresses what is at first sight inexplicable: how could this new pictorialism on queros, often referencing the Inca past and specific “idolatrous” rites, persist, and proliferate during precisely the mid-colonial era of idolatry extirpation?

Cummins unravels the mystery by following queros and their imagery as they circulated across partially overlapping but distinct fields of desire or regimes of value. In pre-Columbian times they were highly valued gifts granted by sovereigns to the nobles among conquered peoples, conveying in their pairing as well as their imagery the sort of hierarchized complementarity characteristic of Inca rule. After the conquest, they...
became commodities available to all. Native lords known as caciques were major purchasers, but so, too, were many Spaniards, as the cache of queros and aquillas discovered in the hold of the shipwrecked Atocha shows. For caciques, queros, now repositors of an indigenous heraldry, marked out social distinction in Spanish terms along with some of native lordship’s remaining underpinning in indigenous cosmology. What exempted them from extirpation? Cummins argues that they had entered the realm of aesthetics, as pleasing objets d’art, suitable as well as mementos, akin to tourist art, of the exotic ways of Indian subjects.

In spite of the elegance and importance of this work, Cummins misses a few analytic opportunities. Queros’ persistence must in part be due to their perceived utility as goblet-like things to drink with, capable of marking hospitality, generosity, and hierarchy within the Iberian world, as well as across the Iberian/Andean divide. That combination made them useful, as well, as markers of the colonial relationship itself. Queros’ “cupness,” along with their exotic, pictorially conveyed “Inca-ness,” made them into proper sorts of mementos, usable in Iberian commensal contexts to repeatedly toast and recall a returning Spaniard’s conquests in the Indies.

Such quibbles aside, Cummins’s book gives the colonial historian much to think about and heralds a new era in the interdisciplinary study of the transcultural worlds of colonialism.

THOMAS A. ABERCROMBIE
New York University


The introduction of railroads into nineteenth-century Brazil, as William R. Summerhill shows in this book, produced economic growth and helped to forge a new economic order. Nonetheless, he suggests that government policies to promote the expansion of rail transport may have led to overinvestment in some railroads, investment that he believes might have been more wisely allocated to promote other forms of social capital such as education. These policies produced what he labels “order against progress” (p. 103). In this compact and tightly argued work, Summerhill focuses narrowly on four questions: the direct impact of railroads on the Brazilian economy, the role of government involvement in railroads, foreign investment, and the long-term impact of railroads on Brazil. Summerhill is one of a small but growing group of young historians inspired by the “New Economic History” who have applied increasingly sophisticated quantitative and formal techniques to the study of the economic history of Latin America. As he points out in the introduction, he has consciously chosen to narrow his focus rather than aim for a “broad and impressionistic treatment [that] might prove both wide-ranging and evocative, but would also lack sufficient analytical depth” (p. 6). Consequently, this is not a full-scale history of railroads in pre-World War I Brazil but rather a careful and focused analysis of the key features of one of the most important sectors of the Brazilian economy.

Although railways were heavily concentrated in the southeastern coffee-growing region (Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Minas Gerais), investors also constructed lines in the south, northeast, and even on the northern coast. Summerhill estimates that by 1913 the value of railroad transport services accounted for slightly over four percent of the gross domestic product. The stock of physical capital of a modest railroad in Brazil, Summerhill notes, was larger than that of the entire cotton textile industry. As in much of Latin America, the two main sources of financing were British investors and the Brazilian government (federal and state). Government played a large role in constructing, operating, and financing railways in Brazil. Early on, the government guaranteed dividend levels to make investment attractive for the private sector. By 1914, however, state and federal governments owned nearly two-thirds of all railroad routes in Brazil.

Summerhill argues that railroads improved overall resource allocation in Brazil, and did it “on the cheap” (p. 58). Railroads reduced freight costs and helped integrate product and labor markets. In particular, railroads stimulated the expansion of the coffee economy, easily Brazil’s most important economic sector, by increasing land under cultivation, by attracting immigrant labor, and by stimulating investment in land. Although Summerhill argues that railroads did not promote export agriculture, they also did little to promote “structural change in Brazil through industrialization” (p. 154). He sees this shortcoming not as a failure of railroads, but rather as due to the structural limitations of a preindustrial economy.

Some of the most interesting analysis in the book focuses on the role of government. Summerhill effectively shows that without state intervention, “Brazil would have received much less railroad investment than it did” (p. 157). He is persuasive in showing that the most important influences on investment and policies were domestic. Through policies Summerhill calls “brilliantly calculated,” the Brazilian government limited the ability of foreigners to generate large profits. The major railroads “generated impressive rent streams” and “the bulk of the rent generated by railroads remained in Brazil” (p. 161). No one, neither the government nor private investors (domestic or foreign), made large profits.

Summerhill is less persuasive in his conclusions when he departs from his careful, analytically focused arguments. He suggests that railroads helped to concentrate slaveholding in the southeast and strengthened support for slavery there while weakening it elsewhere. He offers no evidence nor even references to the vast bibliography on this central issue. At the close of the book, he once again highlights the positive