

Colonial Latin American Historical Review

Volume 9

Issue 2 Volume 9, Issue 2 (Spring 2000)

Article 6

4-1-2000

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Recommended Citation

Hall, G. Emlen. "Victor M. Uribe-Uran, *Honorable Lives: Lawyers, Family, and Politics in Colombia, 1780-1850*." *Colonial Latin American Historical Review* 9, 2 (2000): 302. <https://digitalrepository.unm.edu/clahr/vol9/iss2/6>

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Honorable Lives: Lawyers, Family, and Politics in Colombia, 1780-1850. By Victor M. Uribe-Uran. (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2000. xii + 276 pp. Illustration, map, charts, tables, appendixes, notes, glossary, index. \$50.00 cloth.)

This admirable study of Colombian lawyers and their institutions in the late-colonial and early-republican periods challenges the notion that the chaotic history of the period was completely dominated by rogue *caudillos* engaged in an endless struggle for power. In fact, argues Victor Uribe Uran, the patterns of change were more deeply reflected in struggles over the role of law and legal institutions fought about by those agents of social adjustment everywhere, lawyers.

Uribe-Uran looks at who Colombian lawyers were during this time and finds an elite group often closely linked by marriage and family, even if sometimes torn by changing political loyalties. Detailed genealogies accompanying the text demonstrate the intricate connections across groups and between generations of Colombian lawyers during this period. Drawn heavily from primary documents and a secondary literature in both Spanish and English, the data makes a convincing case for the importance of interlocking

Colombian lawyers both in maintaining colonial stability and in changing from above that colonial status.

Uribe-Uran also looks at how those lawyers were educated in Colombian universities. He finds a struggle over curriculum that mirrored a wider debate about the principles that would govern the emerging nation state. He shows curricular changes that paralleled political ones, with a shift in emphasis from the highly scholastic Roman law—typical of traditional civil law curricula—to the much more unfamiliar political principles of government organization. Finally, the author looks at the work these educated lawyers did and finds important shifts from dependence on bureaucratic employment for status ("empleomania") to other more fundamentally political areas of legal work.

In the process of assembling and presenting the intricate factual foundations for these parallel developments in the Colombian legal profession, Uribe-Uran demonstrates the kind of background stability that the elite group of lawyers provided for a period that would have been even more chaotic without them.

In other Latin American communities, similar groups prompted and mediated fundamental social and legal change. Sometimes they were not even lawyers. For example, in New Mexico during roughly the same period described by Uribe-Uran there were no formally trained attorneys and no law schools at all, even though the transitions from Spanish to Mexican to United States hegemony were equally as traumatic as those involving Colombia's efforts to establish a stable nation state. Nevertheless, in New Mexico a small group of astute survivors, led by men like Donaciano Vigil, formed the same kind of governing elite as the lawyers in Colombia and the rest of Latin America.

Indeed, when Uribe-Uran speaks of Colombian lawyers, he really addresses a governing elite much more broadly cast in the civil law tradition, of which Latin America is a part, than the common law one of the neighboring United States. Uribe-Uran describes law as the third most important occupation in New Granada, but less than a third of that total became full-time practicing lawyers. The large majority went into other businesses, journalism, politics, or became, especially at the beginning of the period, career bureaucrats.

The diffusion of Colombian lawyers through a wide range of important societal functions indicates an important difference between the civil law tradition of which Colombia is a part and our common law tradition. In civil law countries, legal training, then as now, did not so much lead into a narrow and esoteric profession as it led into a much broader world of more diffused power. In the Colombia that Uribe-Uran describes, and in Latin America in general, legal education was much more a matter of general education than it was a matter of narrow technical training. The Colombian law

school curricular wars that Uribe-Uran describes primarily involved political philosophy, not legal doctrine. Some basic comparative analysis would have helped put Colombian "lawyers" in a clearer context for a general audience.

While for the most part well written, *Honorable Lives* occasionally suffers from an over-use of social science jargon ("career trajectories") and an awkward repetition of curious Spanish phrases and their English translations ("unpalatable priest" for "indegistable cura"). These are minor cavils compared to the sophisticated and detailed analyses of basic data that underlie this important study. It could only have been written by someone as thoroughly familiar with Colombian lawyers and their history as Victor Uribe-Uran obviously is. As such, it adds greatly to our understanding of the role of lawyers in the important transitional events between colony and independence.

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