Colonial Latin America

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Answer three of the following five questions:

1. To which degree and in which way did pre-hispanic social, cultural, religious, political and economic practices and norms shape and influence Latin America’s post-conquest societies and cultures? What conceptual approaches have been used to tackle this central issue? Does it make a difference whether we talk about 1550 or 1800? Be sure to discuss this issue for at least three core and peripheral regions, and present specific evidence for your assertions. What variables best explain divergent developments regarding the impact of pre-Hispanic politico-cultural matrixes during the post-conquest centuries?

2. Historians have provided various explanations for the peculiar shape and development of Latin American economies during the colonial era. Different conceptual approaches have been used to explain these developments, from cultural, to institutional, structuralist economic, and various types of Marxist explanations.

Your answer should consist of two parts: First outline some of the major interpretations of Latin American colonial economies over the past fifty years. Secondly, provide a brief interpretive overview of how you yourself would approach colonial Latin American economies, addressing major variables such as markets (and other forms of exchange), prices, labor regimes, productivity, capital, ownership structures, and the role of the state (crown). Be sure to differentiate between various phases of the colonial regime, and between at least three different regional economies.

3. Writing at the turn of the twenty-first century, a historian commented on the dramatic increase of scholarship about gender in Latin America the last thirty years and suggested that that increase made the field difficult to survey. “[I] will leave to a future historian,” the scholar wrote, “the task of evaluating whether gender analysis has moved ‘from the margins to center’ in the ways historians have integrated it, or at least mentioned it, in studies that do not specifically focus on gender or women.” Is this true, in your view, in relation to the recent historiography of Colonial Latin America.

4. “Virtually every major difference between colonial Brazil and colonial Spanish America can be traced to the much more important role that African slavery played in the Brazilian economy.” Discuss.

5. Iberian colonialism in Latin America lasted more than three centuries largely without the support of standing armies. What factors contributed to this continuity? And what factors shaped the eventual rupture?