



Bureaucrats, Planters, and Workers: The Making of the Tobacco Monopoly in Bourbon Mexico

Susan Deans-Smith

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A government monopoly provides an excellent case study of state-society relationships. This is especially true of the tobacco monopoly in colonial Mexico, whose revenues in the later half of the eighteenth century were second only to the silver tithe as the most valuable source of government income. This comprehensive study of the tobacco monopoly illuminates many of the most important themes of eighteenth-century Mexican social and economic history, from issues of economic growth and the supply of agricultural credit to rural relations, labor markets, urban protest and urban workers, class formation, work discipline, and late colonial political culture.

Drawing on exhaustive research of previously unused archival sources, Susan Deans-Smith examines a wide range of new questions. Who were the bureaucrats who managed this colonial state enterprise and what policies did they adopt to develop it? How profitable were the tobacco manufactories, and how rational was their organization? What impact did the reorganization of the tobacco trade have upon those people it affected most—the tobacco planters and tobacco workers?

This research uncovers much that was not previously known about the Bourbon government's management of the tobacco monopoly and the problems and limitations it faced. Deans-Smith finds that there was as much continuity as change after the monopoly's establishment, and that the popular response was characterized by accommodation, as well as defiance and resistance. She argues that the problems experienced by the monopoly at the beginning of the nineteenth century did not originate from any simmering, entrenched opposition. Rather, an emphasis upon political stability and short-term profits prevented any innovative reforms that might have improved the monopoly's long-term performance and productivity.

With detailed quantitative data and rare material on the urban working poor of colonial Mexico, *Bureaucrats, Planters, and Workers* will be important reading for all students of social, economic, and labor history, especially of Mexico and Latin America.



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