

From Colony to Republic: The Social History of Law in Nineteenth-Century Latin America

British Academy Conference held hybridly at the University of
Oxford and on Zoom, 20-22 October 2022

Conference Convener: Timo Schaefer (timo.schaefer@ed.ac.uk)

This conference examines how ordinary people responded to the transformation of Latin America's systems of justice following the end of the colonial period. In the decades following Latin American independence the region embarked on a veritable legal revolution. In this period, Latin American lawmakers eliminated the differences between social groups that had defined the colonial legal order. They abolished slavery. They designed procedural rules to guarantee the equal treatment of all litigants and they dramatically improved the accessibility of the law, building courts and appointing justices of the peace in areas whose residents had previously had little contact with formal judicial institutions.

Scholars have done much to illuminate the intellectual history of that legal revolution. But they have neglected to study the impact of legal change on society in nineteenth-century Latin America, treating republican law largely as touching the lives of popular sectors only as a disruptive, punitive imposition. This conference, by contrast, explores how ordinary people engaged with and used republican law. It invites scholars to consider how Latin America's post-colonial legal revolution remade not only the paper-worlds of men of letters but the world of ideas, interests, and ambitions of the region's non-elite majorities.

Thursday, 20 October 2022

5-6:30 pm, Latin American Centre Main Seminar Room, 1 Church Walk

Keynote Address

Juan Manuel Palacio (Universidad de San Martín, Argentina)

Towards a History of Labour Law in Post-Colonial Latin America

Friday, 21 October 2022

10:30 am – 11 am, Latin American Centre Main Seminar Room, 1 Church Walk

Introduction and Mingling

11 am – 1 pm, Latin American Centre Main Seminar Room, 1 Church Walk

Session 1: Labour-Law in Post-Colonial Latin America

Chair: Juan Manuel Palacio (Universidad de San Martín, Argentina)

Andre Jockyman (University of Oxford, UK)

Anti-Vagrancy Laws and Forced Labor in Post-Colonial Brazil, 1824-1840

Casey Lurtz (John Hopkins University, USA)

Debt Peonage in Post-Colonial Mexico

María Luisa Soux (Universidad Mayor de San Andrés, Bolivia)

Labor and Servitude in Post-Colonial Bolivian Law

3 pm – 5 pm, History Faculty Lecture Theatre, 41-47 George Street

Session 2: From Colony to Republic

Chair: Graciela Iglesias Rogers (University of Winchester, UK)

Bianca Premo (Florida International University, USA)

Civil Lawsuits in the Late Colony

Sarah Chambers (University of Minnesota, USA)

Civil Law and Property Confiscation during the Wars of Independence

Tomás Straka (Universidad Católica Andrés Bello, Venezuela)

The Meaning of Race in Venezuela between Colony and Republic

Reuben Zahler (University of Oregon, USA)

Women and the Law in Colonial and Republican Venezuela

Saturday, 22 October 2022

10 am – 12 pm, Latin American Centre Main Seminar Room, 1 Church Walk

Session 3: Plebeian, Slave, and Women Litigants in Post-Colonial Latin America

Chair: Eduardo Posada-Carbó (University of Oxford, UK)

Yesenia Barragan (Rutgers University, USA)

The Legal Rights of Slaveholders in Gradual Emancipation Colombia

Cassia Roth (University of Georgia, USA)

Enslaved Mothers as Litigants in Post-Colonial Brazil

Ángela Pérez-Villa (Western Michigan University, USA)
Women as Litigants in Early Post-Colonial Colombia

Natalia Sobrevilla (University of Kent, UK)
Soldiers as Litigants in Post-Colonial Peru

2 pm – 4 pm, Latin American Centre Main Seminar Room, 1 Church Walk

Session 4: Indigenous People and Republican Law

Chair: Timo Schaefer (University of Edinburgh, UK)

Helga Baitenmann (University of London, UK)
Land Disentailment Through the Eyes of Indigenous Litigants (Michoacán, 1869-1909)

Daniela Marino (Escuela Nacional de Antropología e Historia, Mexico)
Changes in Indigenous Property Rights in Post-Colonial Mexico

Cecilia Méndez (University of California Santa Barbara, USA)
A Radical Liberal Experiment and the Fight for Indian Rights in Peru

Tristan Platt (University of St. Andrews, UK)
Republican Law and Indigenous Revindication (Potosí 1825-1900)

5 pm – 7 pm, Latin American Centre Main Seminar Room, 1 Church Walk

Commentaries and Final Reflections

Commentary by Fernanda Pirie (University of Oxford, UK)

Commentary by Alan Knight (University of Oxford, UK)

Participants Final Reflections