

to scholars of Panama, many of whom can better utilize their research time in the larger documentary holdings of Panama City, Bogotá, and Seville. In this presentation of raw data, *Testamento y sociedad* follows in the footsteps of Figueroa Navarro's previous studies of Panamanian social history.

CHRISTOPHER WARD, Central Florida Community College

Letters from the New World: Selected Correspondence of Don Diego de Vargas to His Family, 1675–1706. Edited by JOHN L. KESSEL, RICK HENDRICKS, and MEREDITH D. DODGE. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. xiv, 237 pp. Paper. \$17.95.

By Force of Arms: The Journals of Don Diego de Vargas, New Mexico, 1691–1693. Edited by JOHN L. KESSEL and RICK HENDRICKS. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. xvi, 668 pp. Cloth. \$32.50.

Letters from the New World is an abridged version of *Remote Beyond Compare* (1989), the introduction to a multivolume translation of the journals (1691–1704) of Diego de Vargas, who, as governor of New Mexico, led the conquest of the region in 1692. It reprints the original volume's detailed biographical sketch of Vargas and 22 of its 64 letters, written by Vargas or his relatives between 1675 and 1706. The result is a short, readable volume that captures the human side of a sometimes successful, sometimes beleaguered colonial administrator. From it emerges the personal cost borne by a bureaucrat who lived a world away from family and estates. It conveys the ongoing strain of knowing only partial and belated news of events at home, Vargas' repeated efforts to obtain and maintain favor and preference, and his never-ending struggle for financial solvency. The rarity of such familial correspondence makes this inexpensive paperback edition particularly welcome.

By Force of Arms, the second volume in the Vargas series, presents the governor's journals from 1691 to 1693. During these years, Vargas plans and leads an almost bloodless reconquest of New Mexico in which he reclaims the region's pueblos for Charles II. While the correspondence translated here contains fascinating details of the campaign, it also reveals characteristics of colonial administration that transcend a regional narrative. It includes repeated examples of jurisdictional disputes, lengthy testimony about an alleged mercury mine in New Mexico, the routine use of expert witnesses, the importance of religious beliefs as a motivation for military action, the value of Indian allies, the difficult logistics of moving even a small expeditionary force from El Paso to Santa Fe and back, and the ubiquitous use of religious symbols, such as the rosary and the cross, in the reconquest. Given the generally unfavorable reputation of late seventeenth-century Spanish and colonial administration, the reader is struck by the effectiveness of the expedi-

tion, the thoroughness of administrative review before the expedition begins, and the flexibility accorded to administrators far from the royal and viceregal courts. To the extent that the Vargas campaign was typical, the colonial administrative system worked much more effectively than is frequently acknowledged.

The editors deserve plaudits for providing readable translations, extremely copious and informative notes, extensive bibliographies, and useful indexes. Obviously valuable for borderlands historians, these two volumes are also instructive for colonialists in general. The Vargas project is off to a fine start.

MARK A. BURKHOLDER, University of Missouri, St. Louis

Stedman's Surinam: Life in an Eighteenth-Century Slave Society. By JOHN GABRIEL STEDMAN. Edited by RICHARD PRICE and SALLY PRICE. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992. Plates. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. 350 pp. Cloth, \$60.00. Paper, \$19.95.

John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative of a Five Years' Expedition . . . to Suriname* in the 1770s, its flaws withal, is a uniquely realistic account of West Indian plantation slave society. Richard and Sally Price are not only the foremost experts on Surinamese history and culture but pioneers in reinterpreting and decoding eighteenth-century slave source materials. This book is a 50 percent abridgment and modernization of their 1988 edition of Stedman's original manuscript; it contains half the illustrations of the first printed edition of 1796, a splendid new introduction, and notes that take advantage of Stedman's journal and other manuscripts lodged in the James Ford Bell Library at the University of Minnesota. It is therefore an accessible edition of a text indispensable for all students of West Indian plantation slavery.

The Prices' detectivelike reconstruction of the history of Stedman's *Narrative* and their deconstruction of its changing content are a reminder that all such documents have many layers, and this one more than most. Stedman (1744–1797) was a literate half-Scots, half-Dutch adventurer whose early life, from the evidence of his unpublished autobiography, was that of a picaresque but honest Tom Jones or Roderick Random. Yet the most memorable period of Stedman's youth was the four years he spent as a junior officer in the mercenary Scots regiment campaigning for the Dutch against their maroon rebels in Suriname (1773–1777). This involved not only guerrilla fighting in an exotic tropical environment but interactions with a jumbled gallery of humankind: the wild but often heroic maroons; the quarrelsome, licentious, and short-lived soldiers; the luxury-loving and sadistic planters; the oppressed and culturally dislocated African slaves. With one of the slaves, the beautiful mulatto Joanna, Stedman had a passionate liaison that resulted in the birth of a son, his only child.

Stedman recorded his Surinamese experiences with candid immediacy in his