

COMPARATIVE APPROACHES TO LATIN AMERICAN HISTORY*

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A little more than fifty years ago, French medievalist Marc Bloch (1928) tried to persuade his fellow historians of the importance and usefulness of the "comparative method."¹ Explanations, he argued, based on "those proverbs of common-sense psychology which have neither more nor less validity than their opposites" had to be replaced by causal explanations arrived at with the help of systematic comparison. In response to these exhortations, most historians, as Bloch himself noted, "express polite approval and then go back to work without changing their habits."² Nevertheless, the last decades have seen a remarkable growth in comparative studies in history as well as in the social sciences in general. Since 1959, the journal *Comparative Studies in Society and History* has played a crucial role in this regard.³ Yet the results of comparative historical studies have not been such as to challenge the skepticism of many historians who associate comparative approaches with facile analogies, pseudo-similarities, and questionable generalizations. Comparison too often seems to imply the sacrifice of the unique and differentiating features of each situation in the past for the sake of some broad scheme. Many historians are put off by social scientists, such as sociologist S. N. Eisenstadt (1963), whose ambitious comparative schema seem marked by typologizing with little empirical basis.⁴ To quote Bloch once more, the empirical historian will probably never become a philosopher of history or a sociologist although "he may, according to his state of mind, grant them admiration or a skeptical smile."⁵

Latin American history, we believe, lends itself particularly well to fruitful comparative study. Forming a geographical and cultural unit that is comparable with Anglo-America, Latin America is part of the Western world while also sharing a number of characteristics with the

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Third World. All this forms a point of departure for *external* comparison.⁶ Within Latin America itself, the differentiation of institutional development through time makes *internal* comparison rewarding, and the division of Spanish America and Brazil also has rich comparative potential.

We begin our critical review of the use of comparative approaches in recent scholarship on Latin America by examining the theoretical and methodological problems involved. We will then survey the use of explicit comparison in Latin American history, whether by single scholars or by teams working within the framework of larger or more ambitious projects. Finally, we will illustrate in more detail the contribution that comparison, on different levels and for various purposes, can make in the conception and execution of a specific research project. For this purpose we have chosen a project in which all three of us, in one way or another, have been involved: a detailed study of the evolution of rural society in the Cuzco region of highland Peru since late colonial times.

I. DEFINITION AND OBJECTIVES OF COMPARISON

In scrutinizing the conceptual problems involved, we must emphasize that the use of comparison in history cannot be isolated, in its theoretical aspects, from that in the social sciences in general with their long tradition of continuous and systematic use of comparison.⁷ This section will focus on the crucial methodological objectives of comparative research: what should be compared, how should comparison be carried out, and how should we interpret the results? Discussion of the risks and limitations inherent in comparative approaches does not, of course, question the utility of comparison, as we will show.

The use of the classic term, the "comparative method," has become less frequent in both history and the social sciences. Merville J. Herskovits (1956) and Edmund Leach (1968, p. 342) have shown how the traditional concept of a "comparative method" has fallen into disuse in anthropology since it corresponds to a specific style of argument. In fact, the nineteenth-century evolutionists had sought to demonstrate that all human societies followed the same course of development because of a standardization of the human mind and an identical capacity of invention, but later trends within anthropology assigned other objectives for comparative study. Diffusionism sought evidence of cultural influences while intercultural statistical analysis sought to establish taxonomies of cultural elements. As for sociology, Eisenstadt (1968) has also argued that there is no specific comparative *method* in the sense of a special theory and specific analytical tools. Comparison, he argued, implies "a special focus on cross-societal, institutional or macrosocietal aspects of societies and social analysis" (p. 423).⁸

The "comparative method" in the social sciences was conceived

by some pioneers to be analogous to the use of the experimental method in the natural sciences. The continuing efforts of some investigators to approximate laboratory conditions, as sociologist Neil Smelser (1976) has pointed out, ignore the fact that "most data in the social sciences remain 'historical' in the sense that they are precipitates from the flow of social life that transpires without controlled experimentation" (p. 156).⁹ Such efforts no longer seem realistic today. Rather, comparative "approaches" or "perspectives" are best seen as a way of approximation that allows us to consider historical phenomena within a broader context than the one from which they emerge. Some generalizations may be arrived at through the observation of recurrences, while differences permit us to establish what is unique. Comparison, in other words, presupposes similarities as well as differences: to compare that which is absolutely equal or different would make no sense.

While nobody would deny that the search for valid generalization is a primary objective of the social sciences, the function traditionally assigned to history has been that of individualization. Yet, as Robert F. Berkhofer (1971, p. 246) observes, this is a half-truth at best since generalizations often have to be and are, in fact, pursued by historians as well. The very nature of the language and the requirements of the process of communication, he went on, require the use of comparison, whether implicitly or explicitly, in the search for the unique no less than in the construction of generalizations. Ernst Bernheim (1903, p. 167), author of a classic work on the historical method, has even argued that comparison is more important for historians than for others solely concerned with generalization, through induction or deduction, since only comparison can definitely establish uniqueness. In the words of Sidney Mintz (1959), an anthropologist thoroughly familiar with the past, "History never repeats itself exactly, and every event is, of course, unique; but historical forces surely may move in parallel paths at the same or at different times. The comparisons of such parallels may reveal regularities of potential scientific value" (p. 280).

Generalizations as well as uniqueness, the opposite ends of a continuum, are a logical outcome of the verification of hypotheses. The search for causal explanation is often closely linked, as an objective of comparative study, to establishing a greater degree of predictability. Most social scientists, however, and almost all historians by definition, are wary on that score given the notorious variability of human nature. Other aims are also given for comparative research. Bloch thought comparison might serve to reveal important phenomena that would otherwise have gone unnoticed. Jerzy Topolski (1976, p. 471) adds that such studies might even help establish facts for which enough data in the sources are lacking—a most risky undertaking from our point of view.¹⁰ Comparison can also be of great value even in research that is not ex-

plicitly comparative in focus—as we shall show in the final section.¹¹ In the first sections of the present article, however, we are only concerned with systematically comparative studies in history. The main objectives of comparison can be summarized as: (a) to formulate valid generalizations through the observation of recurrences;¹² (b) to demonstrate uniqueness through the observation of differences; and (c) to help establish causal explanations.

Before ending this discussion, it is important to note that there are a large number of studies that are self-labelled as “comparative analyses” or “comparative research” while remaining juxtapositions of descriptive accounts, serving no real analytical purpose. At best, they produce a classification of societies, countries, groups, or regions according to a number of variables without integrating them into an analytical framework that measures the significance and interrelation of the variables.

II. THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PROBLEMS

The theoretical and methodological problems faced in comparative research are not of a different order from those in other historical and social science approaches. However, even with a clearly defined analytical objective, there is still a danger of an artificial comparative study being produced if the special requirements of comparative research are not met. A failure in the definition of concepts, the absence of a homogeneous data base, or an inadequate selection of units to be compared would all impair the validity of the conclusions reached.¹³

A firm definition of concepts and the homogenization of the data are important in all comparative studies, especially when working with secondary data or with concepts at a high level of abstraction. It is essential that the data being used should be as similar as possible in their level of complexity and nature. Except in the case of first-hand observations, it is, of course, difficult to get *strictly* comparable data sets. In the case of secondary information, the less there is of prior classification and aggregation of data the easier it will be to establish meaningful comparisons. If it is not possible to meet these norms, then the nature of the evidence must be clearly explained and its implications evaluated.¹⁴

It might appear commonplace to assert that the choice of units of comparison should depend directly on the specific objectives of the study in question. Yet some of the participants in the theoretical debate have argued that comparative analysis in and of itself requires that the units be chosen from different social or cultural contexts or different social systems. Different kinds of societies, they tend to argue, should either form the units of comparison or their context.¹⁵ Anthropologists, for their part, have been especially interested in cross-cultural compari-

son. William H. Sewell (1967), on the other hand, has taken the opposite position in his study of the logic of comparative history. Theoretically there are no limits, he believes, on the size, however small, of units of comparison. We share Sewell's belief that, from the historian's point of view, a comparative study could just as well focus on, let us say, two different regions instead of two distinct societies as long as the regions exhibit some degree of social, cultural and/or economic differentiation. Sewell may, however, go too far when he declares that "within any given historical study, different comparative frameworks will be appropriate for different problems" (p. 214). The risk of such a procedure lies in the use of diverse comparisons as mere illustrations without the systematic analysis that should characterize a historical study. Finally, let us not forget the important function of comparison within a given socio-cultural system in order to measure the representativeness of the units to be compared. This intracultural comparison may serve as a first step before undertaking a higher level comparison in order to guarantee more valid results.

Having stressed the absence of strict norms in the choice of units of comparison, we must nevertheless stress that there are certain basic considerations to be kept in mind that are sometimes overlooked: (a) the units of comparison must be chosen to serve the objectives of the study; (b) they should be representative of the universe about which generalizations will be made; and (c) their significance in relation to their respective contexts must be similar or, at the least, made explicit and evaluated within the framework of analysis. By keeping these considerations in mind, the risks of distortion in choice of units of comparison or the loss of significance when they are taken out of context will be greatly reduced.

III. CATEGORIZATION OF COMPARATIVE STUDIES

If there is no special comparative method, then there is also no single type of comparative study, which may vary widely according to different objectives and units of comparison. Hence, different criteria can be used for the purposes of categorization.

It is, of course, beyond the scope of this essay to examine the use of comparison in the social sciences as a whole. As Smelser (1976) has observed, the issues faced in the abundant literature on comparison in the different disciplines are similar and the "same methodological issues have arisen in field after field" (p. 152).¹⁶ Anthropologist Oscar Lewis (1955), for example, classified ethnographic studies according to their level of geographical coverage. Comparisons would descend from intercontinental and international, to intracontinental and intranational, to comparisons within a given cultural area, group, or single culture. The

comparative framework would be chosen according to the content, objectives, methodology, and research design of the study (pp. 264, 277–79). For sociological studies, Eisenstadt (1968) proposes a categorization according to the level of generality of the unit of comparison. His proposed classification comprises the study of similarities/differences in socially significant norms of behavior, that of different types of personalities and patterns of motivation and attitude, the study of different types of organizations, institutions and processes, and finally the comparative analysis of societies in their totality (p. 422).

Maurice Duverger's (1966) two broad classifications, due to their higher level of abstraction, can be applied to any discipline. One is comparison of analogous phenomena with the use of the same analytical technique—comparison in the strict sense. The other category involves the use of different analytical techniques to compare the various images of the same phenomenon, which Duverger himself admits is "somewhat removed from the traditional concept of comparison" (pp. 261–69). We tend to disagree with his inclusion of this second category in the "comparative method" (his term) since the objective does not belong to comparative analysis proper. Rather, it is seeking the validation of methods and measuring techniques used and the results thus obtained. On the other hand, Duverger's first main category and its subcategories provide us with a useful point of departure for our efforts to arrive at a satisfactory categorization.

To do this we must first look at the characteristics of the units of comparison and then at the aims or objectives of the study. In accordance with the first criterion, one can speak of either *close* or *distant comparison*. Close comparison takes place in the case of more or less similar structures, reasonably near each other in time and/or space. Thus the variables that are not subject to comparison are brought under control and rendered more homogeneous in the process. Close comparisons are often institutional with the aim of verifying hypotheses. Thus, they cannot be disconnected from the theoretical orientation which guides them in the search for evidence. The degree of analogy that should exist between the units to be compared must depend on the objectives of the research and the level of generalization pursued. Close comparisons logically focus on the differences between the units of comparison. Distant comparisons, on the other hand, are carried out between units of comparison belonging to different types of structures or institutions. Thus, the focus will be on similarities notwithstanding the distance in time and/or space or other distinctive features.¹⁷

A distinction can also be made between *diachronic* comparison, in which units can be compared with each other at different points along a time axis, and a *synchronic* one, in which different units are compared at a given moment. One variant of diachronic comparison could involve a

single unit being compared with itself over time, although this should not lessen one's caution in justifying the chosen comparison. For the historian, diachronic comparison involving two or more units over time might seem the most natural procedure since it would be the most likely to detect change and development. In our opinion, however, one must be very cautious in making such comparisons. As Dutch rural historian B. H. Slicher van Bath (1967, pp. 172ff.) has said, special care must be taken given the much larger number of variables, known and unknown, introduced through the dimension of time.¹⁸ In many ways, the issue parallels the distinction between processes (diachronic comparison) and structures (synchronic) although Slicher van Bath goes too far in his assertion that only structures rather than processes lend themselves safely to comparative analysis. Rather, the study of each poses different kinds of methodological problems. As Grew (1980) has argued, the "comparison of processes calls attention to the problem of definition" while the "comparison of structures calls attention to the danger of abstraction" (p. 766).

Categorizing comparative studies in accordance with the objectives pursued is less clearcut. In part we follow the ideas expressed by Sylvia L. Thrupp (1958, p. 10) in this regard. The first category comprises comparative studies that aim to *verify* or *apply a theory* which normally involves the explanation of phenomena. This procedure, often used with success in linguistics, is more difficult to carry out in the social sciences and history since theory is less precise and the data base so massive. At the other extreme lies "comparative description," which we have already disposed of since the aim would be purely *empirical* in nature. Between these two, however, a third category of comparison can be discerned. Here, *theory guides empirical observations* providing the needed interpretative framework. The aim is not that of verifying or applying theory; rather, hypotheses are being verified to permit further theory construction. A fuller distinction can be made within this category of comparisons according to the level of generalization of the hypotheses to be tested or of the theory orienting the analysis. There are comparisons at the service of the "great theory" and others that are guided by what Robert Merton (1957) calls "middle rank theory" (p. 9 and *passim*).¹⁹

The first comparative studies in anthropology, for example, dealt with global societies and pursued the verification of general social theory. In other fields, theoretical constructs on the highest level of generality have been proposed by Karl Marx and his followers as well as by Talcott Parsons and others.²⁰ Their application to reality, however, requires an enormous amount of elaboration and often implies the elimination of variables relevant to the historical context. In a situation where the scope of interpretation left to the scholar becomes too large, applica-

tion easily becomes a mere laundry list without a homogenizing effect. The use of a priori concepts also tends to lead to misinterpretation or distortions of the historical reality. We would suggest in this regard that the higher the degree or level of complexity, the more difficult it becomes to make historically valid or acceptable comparisons. On the other hand, it is indispensable for historians as well as social scientists to have some points of reference of a more general nature than the specific phenomenon being studied. Thus, the utility of explicit comparison, in history at least, seems to be greatest at the middle level, under the guidance of "middle rank theory," where the units compared are not too complex or the comparisons too wide.²¹

IV. THE STATE OF COMPARATIVE STUDIES IN LATIN AMERICAN HISTORY

Comparison was deemed of special importance in early efforts to highlight the similarities and differences among the major regions of the Americas. A strong comparative dimension was inherent in the early efforts at a continent-wide New World history such as Boltonism and the project of a General History of the Americas sponsored for so long by the Pan American Institute of Geography and History.²² There has also been the hotly debated issue of comparative slavery which has been more or less linked to "great theory."²³ Unfortunately, the overblown, somewhat mystifying debate associated with continental theory and the simplified notions underlying the dichotomy of "Anglo-American" and "Latin American slavery" seems to have discouraged rather than stimulated the use of comparison as a normal analytical tool in the field of Latin American history. This is our impression, at least, after reviewing the modest body of historical work produced since 1958 that pursues an explicitly comparative purpose.²⁴

The comparisons carried out so far in Latin American history have tended, in the spatial dimension, to be cross-national in scope, involving three or more units of comparison. In perhaps half of the cases, these comparisons have also involved extra-Latin American developments, be it in Europe (especially Spain) or the United States. Scholars have recently studied the nineteenth-century development process in Argentina and Australia (Fogarty et al. 1979, Dyster 1979), as well as aspects of the development of Manchester, England and São Paulo, Brazil (Wirth and Jones 1978). A study by the late John Phelan (1959) was unusual in that he compared a Latin American country, Mexico, with a non-Latin American country, the Philippines, belonging to the Third World of modern times. Indeed, the absence of comparisons among Latin America, Africa, and Asia from a historical perspective is striking. Twelve years ago, anthropologist John Murra (1970) suggested that our understanding of pre-Spanish Andean social organization

would be greatly enhanced by systematic, cross-cultural comparison under controlled conditions with other non-Western societies of comparable complexity.²⁵ As far as we know, however, research along these lines has not yet produced tangible results. Of the various Latin American nations, Mexico and Brazil, not surprisingly perhaps, have been the favorite objects of comparison, at times with one another. In these and other Latin American countries, regional contrasts often appear more striking than the common characteristics on a national level. Therefore comparison on a regional level would seem to be especially rewarding since one avoids the problems of cross-national comparison. The most ambitious effort has been a collaborative project on the politics of three Brazilian states from 1889 to 1937, which we shall discuss in more detail later. Apart from a few cases, however, the numerous opportunities for systematic regional comparison still remain to be fully exploited by historians.²⁶

Institutions and socioeconomic processes have attracted the greatest attention to date as subjects for comparison. Apart from slavery and race relations, as already mentioned, quite a few studies have appeared on frontiers, landholding, immigration, urbanization, and regional economies while individual studies of transportation and colonial silver mining have proved rewarding. The rapidly developing field of Latin American labor history has also attracted comparative study at an earlier stage than in other long established fields.²⁷ The dynamic CLACSO Commission on Social and Economic History has no doubt helped to focus attention on comparative studies in many of these fields. On the other hand, there is no doubt that, on the whole, political history from the Conquest to the Wars of Independence and the evolution of national states has attracted less attention from those historians of Latin America interested in comparison than has social and economic history.

As early as 1935 the Mexican historian Silvio Zavala (1935–36) had drawn attention to some of the fascinating and significant similarities as well as differences between the conquest of the Canary Islands and that of the New World, shortly afterwards, on the other side of the Atlantic. Yet, with the exception of Friedrich Katz's (1976) comparison of Cuzco and Tenochtitlán, the rich comparative potential of the Conquest has barely been tapped. Comparison could fruitfully be made within the same imperial framework, or, with greater caution, among the various powers. Last, but not least important, the Conquest considered from the point of view of the various native peoples would be most illuminating.²⁸

The Wars of Independence in the various parts of the Americas have begun to receive more attention, especially in connection with the U.S. Bicentennial. The distinguished historian of the American independence movement in its global context, Richard B. Morris, joined with a great number of North American and Mexican colleagues at a 1976 con-

ference to explore the differences as well as any similarities between the independence movements in the two countries (Vázquez and Morris 1976). The question of measuring the impact of the American war of independence on the Mexican process would be, in this context, an especially crucial one. Yet as a critic has pointed out, no contributor was able to meet "the first requirement" of the comparative historian in this case: "to explain how one defines and measures *influence*."²⁹ Morris has himself admitted that comparative history is a "treacherous quicksand" and that "the great cultural gulf" separating the U.S. and Mexican peoples could not possibly be ignored.

Comparisons between the various Latin American countries would thus appear to be more feasible and rewarding, especially in the case of Peru and Mexico, the corelands of their respective Viceroyalties. Political developments there between 1814 and 1824 were both shaped by the political changes occurring in their common metropolis, Spain. Brian Hamnett (1978) has given us a detailed, insightful and well-informed account of the "counterrevolutionary phase" from 1814 to 1821 which was soon followed, in both countries, by political independence based on the conservative *criollo* elites. Especially to be commended in his work is the inclusion of the Spanish political conflicts in the analysis of events in the colonies. He fails, however, to distinguish the structural features from the events. Thus, the great comparative potential of the topic is not fully exploited.³⁰

Political scientist Jorge Domínguez (1980) set out to explain why some of the overseas territories sided with Spain while others rose in rebellion. The author analyzes both the structures and events leading up to the imperial crisis by comparing Chile, Cuba, Mexico and Venezuela. Steeped in modernization theory, Domínguez rejects, on the basis of extensive readings, a number of explanatory hypotheses previously advanced to explain why a successful insurrection did or did not take place. The crucial factors, in his view, lay in the differences in the "political bargaining and coalition formation" among the different colonial elites and the governments' responses. The main weakness of the book, from a methodological point of view, lies in his decision to extend his comparisons, involving such a high degree of complexity, to such a heterogeneous selection of countries. It might have been more rewarding for his purposes to have compared Cuba and Venezuela alone. Their many similarities in economic, socioracial, and administrative set-up might have brought more variables under control and allowed him to focus in greater depth on the key issues. The rich potential of such an approach is suggested by his brief discussion of the different social and political impact of sugar versus cocoa production.

Evaluating what has been done so far is, of course, a delicate task given the pioneering nature of most comparative work that often makes

it laudable and yet unavoidably risky at the same time. Many of the books and articles reviewed, despite their merits, clearly illustrate the pitfalls alluded to in the introductory sections of this article. The effort to establish global comparisons of complex societies is, as we have noted, notoriously difficult. Frédéric Mauro's (1969) comparison of the economies of colonial Mexico and Brazil shows the dangers of a distant comparison focusing on similarities at a high level of generality. Without a sharp definition of the comparison's objective, there is a risk of gathering surface similarities ranging from the trivial to the substantive. Mauro, for example, compares Mexican silver mining and Brazilian gold mining in terms of location, "international economic prestige," their driving force ("papel motor") as centers of consumption, and impact on the social structure (pp. 241–55). Unfortunately the high level of generality involved tends to bar significant results.³¹

In Phelan's (1959) early essay on the crisis periods experienced in Mexico after 1570 and in the Philippines from 1609 to 1750, the units of comparison involve profoundly different societies and economies. The response of the Spanish Crown may indeed have been the use of strongly coercive measures as he argues, but the context of the crises differ widely in the two cases. While the crisis in the Philippines was externally induced and linked to the Dutch-Spanish rivalry, the depression experienced in Mexico, according to the scholarly consensus at the time the study was written, was internal in nature and related, above all, to a severe drop in the Indian population. One can fairly ask: are they really comparable?³²

As we stressed earlier, the significance of the units of comparison in relation to their respective contexts should be similar or, if not, at least made explicit. This consideration is often overlooked in comparative studies of immigration since comparability is taken as a given between two very different situations if the immigrants in both cases belong to the same national group. The risk lies in breaking the immigrant out of his socioeconomic context. Samuel L. Baily's (1968–69) study of the role of Italians in the labor movements of Argentina, Brazil, and the United States fails on this score. In his brief article, divergent variables such as the level and nature of economic development, political and labor systems, and ethnic composition are skipped over. A recent article on the assimilation of Chinese immigrants in Lima, Peru, and New York City suffers the same weakness. Sociologist Bernard Wong (1978) fails to give the different degrees of complexity and scale their due while also omitting consideration of a crucial variable such as the role of Indians in shaping the pattern of race relations in Peru. Indeed, in functional terms, careful analysis might reveal, in some instances, that immigrants of different national origins occupying similar positions in different contexts might be more adequate as units of comparison.

Comparative analysis is also seriously hampered by the choice of units of comparison that are vastly different in scale and complexity. When comparing sixteenth-century Mexico City and Bahia, Brazil, Stuart B. Schwartz (1969) takes, on the one hand, an inland city of one hundred thousand to three hundred thousand inhabitants and, on the other, a small port city of twenty thousand people, largely enslaved. Furthermore, his comparison focuses not on these differences but on "the shared religious and economic motives of Imperial expansion, added to the common quest for land, wealth and status operating in an urban environment." A study comparing seventeenth-century silver mining in colonial Spanish America and in Lapland, Sweden in the same period (Mörner 1974) can be taken as an even clearer transgression of the rules imposing similar degrees of scale and complexity.³³ Notwithstanding the many methodological pitfalls surrounding distant comparisons, we have argued that they can be justified from a scholarly point of view when focusing on basic similarities rather than on the differences which would naturally abound. A Stanford University conference in 1977 boldly set out to compare aspects of the development of Manchester, England, 1790–1850 with that of São Paulo, Brazil from 1890 to the present. The conference papers failed to justify the comparison of two subjects so widely different in time and space, emphasizing instead the obvious differences that existed. By way of exception, anthropologist Robert Shirley made a useful contribution in relating administrative responses to urbanization and the labor movements in the two cities in an innovative way.³⁴

Systematic comparison can aid immeasurably in arriving at a common and more rigorous terminology, yet the striking thing about the English scholar Alistair Hennessy's (1978) ambitious survey of Latin American "frontiers" is the lack of any single operational definition of the concept, a weakness of the literature on frontiers as a whole. Hennessy introduces the term *a priori* in a rambling discussion of missions, Indians, maroons, mining, cattle, and agriculture in peripheral areas all over Latin America and the Caribbean in the course of almost five hundred years. Katzman (1975), more systematically, uses insights from the study of coffee "frontiers" in São Paulo (1850–1930) and Paraná (1930–60), the early Amazonian rubber boom (1890–1910), and the Amazon today to test "the robustness of the frontier paradigm." Thus, a comparative approach is used to test a series of explanatory hypotheses regarding problems more loosely discussed in Hennessy's comparative description.³⁵

Yet the field of Latin American history has also provided examples of the skillful use of comparison and of the many advantages that can be derived from the use of a comparative approach. It has functioned as a complement to intuition and aided in the formulation of

problems and questions for further research. Systematic comparison has helped in defining analytical concepts and in advancing hypotheses. A judicious use of comparison has also been fruitfully combined with the growing and sophisticated use of quantification in history. Finally, at a time when long-accepted social theory, be it of a Marxist or a non-Marxist brand, is increasingly being challenged or undermined, the comparative testing of theory has taken on even greater importance.

Comparison as an aid in the interpretation of largely quantified data is well illustrated by Herbert Klein's (1978, pp. 229 and *passim*) study on the slave trade of the various European nations between 1700 and the mid-nineteenth century. He finds a surprisingly high degree of similarity in the conduct and organization of the traffic by the various nations involved, including a "uniform drop in mortality figures" among the slaves during the passage in the period from 1700 to 1830. To find out whether slave mortality was particularly high at the time, Klein carries out a number of comparisons with mortality rates in Europe, among European troops serving in the tropics and with Australian convict labor transports.³⁶

Comparison, even without access to new or quantified data, can also help advance new interpretations as shown by Friedrich Katz's (1976) comparison of the capital cities of the Aztec and Inca empires. Choosing topics repeatedly studied separately on the basis of the same limited data sets, Katz uses comparison to produce provocative new interpretations as to the strengths and weaknesses of their respective social orders, thus enriching our understanding.³⁷ Sidney Mintz's (1959) pathbreaking brief comparison of the social evolution towards and away from a sugar plantation economy in Puerto Rico and Jamaica between 1800 and 1850 also pointed in new directions. His study found that "similar trends were at work" in the two cases but at different periods "resulting in certain significant similarities of process." He also showed that both slavery and theoretically free coerced labor could fill the same function in a sugar economy while questioning the importance of ideological as compared to economic factors in the formation of plantation societies.

Recent studies by Colin Maclachlan (1974) and Brazilian historian Ciro F. S. Cardoso (1976) have followed Mintz's piece in suggesting the important role that imperial development decisions played in the New World. Such decisions, as David A. Brading and Harry E. Cross (1972, p. 557) have shown, influenced the rates of silver production in Mexico and Peru—thus convincingly demonstrating that the development of mining could not be understood within the geographic framework of each area alone. A comparative approach can also sharpen our critical understanding of an institution common to the mother country and the colonial possessions. Although limited in focus, Ellen D. Howell's (1967)

comparison of the composition of the cabildos of Seville (1527), Tenerife in the Canaries (1497–1513), and Lima (1534–50) does this well. Unlike earlier generalizations, the chronology and location within the empire are duly taken into account.

“Is there anything,” Marc Bloch once asked, “more dangerous for scientific inquiry than the temptation to regard all things as natural?”³⁸ To avoid this, and a preoccupation with “pseudo causes,” is justification enough as shown by Brading and Cross (1972) in their excellent study. As they point out, “In Mexico the formation of a class of professional miners has been taken for granted; in Peru the iniquities of the mita are equally assumed without question.” In their discussion, they highlight the reasons for divergent answers to a common problem of labor supply. Maclachlan’s (1974) study of regional economies of the two Amazonian provinces of Pará and Maranhão during the colonial period performs a similar function. He shows how the very success of slavery in Maranhão and its failure to be economically viable in Pará led to different relationships with the Indians. Unlike Maranhão, Pará was still struggling to subdue Indian tribes in the nineteenth century in an attempt to satisfy the labor needs of its forest gathering industry which could not utilize slaves.

Brazilian historian Emília Viotti da Costa (1977, pp. 127–47) shows how comparison, as an explanatory device, can operate on different levels in her comparison of the Brazilian Land Law of 1850 and the 1862 Homestead Act in the United States. In addition to examining the congressional debates around the two laws, she shows how capitalism and the expansion of the world market in the nineteenth century led to a reevaluation of land and labor policies. The same tendency is shown to have “assumed different forms and led to opposite policies” in the United States and Brazil. The cleavages revealed by the two laws serve to highlight the divergent social and economic trends within the two countries. David Bushnell (1977) has also undertaken a study of various legal measures enacted by early Argentine and Colombian Liberals. His conscious decision to limit himself to the legislation enacted is no doubt based on the fact that it is more easily comparable than its social impact. Unfortunately, this limits the conclusions of this, let us hope, preliminary study of a fascinating and rewarding subject.³⁹

A Brazilian historian, Eulalia Maria Lahmeyer Lobo (1970) has made a comparison between the merchant communities of eighteenth-century Rio de Janeiro and Charleston, South Carolina with the explicit aim of testing the current sociological generalization to the effect that slave-based plantation societies, export merchants, and large landowners tend to merge. Lobo finds that while this may have been true in the case of Charleston, dominated by the rural aristocracy, it was not so in Rio de Janeiro. She also discusses various possible explanations.⁴⁰

David Ringrose's (1970) study of a little known topic—the carting industry of Castille (1750–1800), Mexico (1540–1600), and Argentina (1770–1850)—shows how a comparative approach can raise interesting new questions. He finds, for example that the early development and decline of a quite sophisticated carting industry in Mexico is associated with the evolution of silver mining. Yet why, he asks, did carting fail to make a comeback as against muleteering during the eighteenth-century revival of the mining industry?

Bloch cited the “lack of correspondence between the meanings of historical terms” as an obstacle to scholarly advance that could be removed through international cooperation in the comparative enterprise.⁴¹ The rapidly growing number of comparative studies on the historical development of “peasant” societies can show how comparison aids in the definition of problems and concepts. Most of the studies, however, have been written by historically minded social scientists and not professional historians. The sophisticated studies of Chilean rural sociologist Cristóbal Kay (1974a, b) encompass the whole of Latin America and Europe but emphasize conditions in Chile, England, and Eastern Europe. Kay uses analytical tools taken from German scholarship, such as *Grundherrschaft* and *Gutswirtschaft*⁴²—that is, the system in which the landlord leaves the cultivation of the landed estate to the “peasants” as opposed to the system where his own enterprise (*demesne*) prevails. This allows for a more precise definition of the character of the “hacienda,” the notoriously ambivalent concept almost always used in the Latin American context. Juan Martínez-Alier (1973, pp. 43–100) in his comparative studies of Cuba, the Peruvian Sierra, and Andalusia, Spain, examines various theoretical approaches to the thorny issue of the similarities/differences between the “peasantry” and the agricultural proletariat.

Mörner (1970)⁴³ has outlined a comparative approach to the study of the history of tenant labor in Europe, Latin America, and Africa that has recently been followed up by Alan Richards (1979) in a detailed study of the labor force within the framework of *Gutswirtschaft* in Eastern Germany, Chile, and Egypt. In no case did he find the concept of “feudal” or “capitalist” to be useful in the analysis of these complex realities. As their common denominator, Richards emphasized that “economic change outstripped political developments,” private property rights in land and labor having been consolidated before a strong state authority could impose itself in these spheres. In a comparison of the estate system in parts of Central Sweden and in Chile from 1800 to 1880, historian Ulf Jonsson (1980) has also refused to identify the continuation of labor rent with feudalism. Rather, it is seen as part of the adjustment of large estates to capitalism. While incompatible with capitalist development in the long run, the large estate system combining

labor rent with other types of labor supply can perfectly well adapt to it during a shorter time period.

Anthropologist Benjamin Orlove (1978) focuses on the theoretical issues involved in the comparative study of Indian "peasant insurrections" and the societies in which they occur. The revolts themselves, that of Túpac Amaru in the Andean Sierra in 1780, the Maya Caste War of 1840, and a couple of early twentieth-century Andean uprisings, are discussed rather schematically and merely as illustrations of his general theoretical points. A more satisfying piece on a similar topic is by another anthropologist, Ronald Waterbury (1975). Waterbury compares the fervently rebellious "peasantry" of Morelos under Emiliano Zapata with the "reactionary or at best neutral" attitude of Oaxaca's "peasants," showing how this contrast is tied to the different structures of landholding and power in the two Mexican states.

"Too often," Bloch said, "it is supposed that the comparative method has no other purpose than hunting out resemblances. It is therefore commonly accused of being content with forced analogies, even of inventing such analogies by arbitrarily postulating some kind of necessary parallelism between various social developments."⁴⁴ Cardoso's (1975b) study of the nineteenth-century development of the coffee industry in the Central American republics of Costa Rica, El Salvador, and Guatemala provides striking evidence that the natural purpose of systematic close comparison is precisely to establish the differences between similar or analogous phenomena. He shows the broadly similar impact of coffee in the three countries but focuses on the divergent and unique aspects of its role in the economy, politics, and society of each. In all three countries measures were taken to facilitate the development of coffee culture through the transformation of the agrarian structure. In Costa Rica this happened during the 1840s, in Guatemala after 1871, and in El Salvador between 1876 and 1885. Cardoso begins by distinguishing the Costa Rican case from the others with which it is often lumped, since it was a gradual process of change with little opposition. Costa Rica, the pioneer in coffee production, was characterized by the absence of a heavy weight of inherited colonial structures. It also faced a chronic shortage of labor and capital which inhibited a process of land concentration on a massive scale. In Guatemala and El Salvador, there was by contrast a more or less rapid and violent process of change that removed at a stroke the obstacles to the concentration of property and provision of labor for coffee production.

Yet Cardoso is not content with a simple over-all contrast, since the differences between Guatemala and El Salvador are striking. In Guatemala, the reform measures were carried out against sectors of the dominant class and the Indian communities while in El Salvador the dominant class as a whole adhered to coffee and the reforms aimed at

the total extinction of the heavily populated indigenous communities which were located in the ideal coffee country. The Guatemalan reforms left the Indian population, which was not concentrated in the coffee region, with the right to hold communal land and *ejidos*. These three unique instances led to differences in the role of the state in the provision of a labor force to the coffee plantations. In Costa Rica, the state's general noninterventionist stance reflected the continuing strength of the small holders, while in Guatemala, beginning in 1876, the state established and enforced a system of forced labor exacted from the still extant Indian villages. The state in El Salvador did not have to involve itself directly with the provision of labor since the radical expropriation of the Indian communities had, at one stroke, thrust the Indian masses into the labor market without defense. Therefore the state could be content with repressing rebellion while letting "natural" economic forces dominate the labor market. Cardoso's piece is, we believe, one of the best comparative studies produced so far in Latin American history.

With few exceptions, the contributions discussed have been the work of single scholars. Yet the growth of the relevant literature and sources makes it increasingly difficult to master the necessary material to carry out a meaningful comparison, especially when more than one country is involved. Historians are justly skeptical of comparisons based only in part on research in primary sources, which is then combined with reading in secondary literature for the other side of the comparison. This obstacle is, however, by no means inherent in comparative studies and it can be overcome by scholarly collaboration between experts on different countries. Ward J. Barrett and Stuart B. Schwartz (1975) provide an encouraging example of such collaboration in their study of the colonial sugar industry of Morelos, Mexico and, Bahia, Brazil—a collaboration that is also interdisciplinary since the former is a geographer and the latter an historian. Their study raises some intriguing questions. Why, for example, was there such a remarkable coincidence of price trends in both countries despite the fact that Morelos produced for a national and Bahia for an international market.⁴⁵

Three North American historians have for ten years tenaciously pursued a joint project on state politics between 1889 and 1937, an example of a systematic, closely coordinated, and large-scale comparative approach. The volumes are on Minas Gerais, by John D. Wirth (1977), Pernambuco, by Robert Levine (1978), and São Paulo, by Joseph L. Love (1980). The project focuses on "regionalism" in terms of political organization and elites. Using a common definition, the three works subject their elite groups to the same kind of quantitative analysis, including a three-generational pattern. Unfortunately, the relationship of politics and the differing socioeconomic structures of and within each state have not yet been fully explored. Though each volume has con-

siderable value, it is to be hoped that the three authors will undertake a final analysis that will provide a better balance of similarities and differences within the three-state framework.⁴⁶

Comparative research on a higher level of scholarly cooperation has in recent years been devoted to the development processes of Argentina and Australia. Special meetings on the topic have taken place at Australia's La Trobe University in 1976 and in Buenos Aires in 1977, organized by the Instituto Torcuato di Tella. In his introduction to the proceedings (Fogarty et al. 1979, pp. 3–15 and *passim*), Argentine historian Ezequiel Gallo first lists the shared features which form the point of departure for the project: the similar form of integration within the world economy, under the leadership of Britain, as exporters of raw materials and recipients of capital and immigrants; a considerable material resource base with a favorable ratio between these natural resources and the population; and finally, the absence of a more deeply ingrained precapitalist institutional framework in a scarcely populated "frontier" area. The main differences are also succinctly defined: the divergent cultural traditions, a fact reinforced by the predominantly "Latin" and Anglo-Saxon immigration each received; the different institutional and political structures, including the relationship to the mother country; and the greater degree of state interventionism in Australia. Such differences have often seemed to lend themselves to use as explanatory hypotheses to explain the relative lag of Argentina behind Australia in developmental terms. Gallo wisely cautions against such procedure with its many pitfalls. He goes on to stress that the comparative work under way will be useful mainly "as a guide and control" that can "suggest new lines of inquiry." Prudently, no "final conclusions" were offered at the 1977 meeting, although a number of specific aspects were carefully explored.⁴⁷

While there have been relatively few explicitly comparative studies to date in the field of Latin American history, encouraging trends have been observed since the late fifties. Fully two thirds of the contributions discussed in this article have appeared in the seventies. Half, including many of the best, have been published since 1975. Comparative approaches have gained a growing acceptance in our field as many specialists realize, in the words of the editors of *New Approaches to Latin American History*, that analytical comparison is "a technical instrument, generally used, easily manageable and capable of achieving results" (Graham and Smith 1974, p. xiii).

V. THE FUNCTIONS OF COMPARISON WITHIN A RESEARCH PROJECT

The importance of comparison as a tool of historical research is by no means limited to studies that are carried out with an explicitly compara-

tive purpose. Indeed, as Raymond Grew's excellent article has pointed out, comparison is useful at almost every stage in the formulation, execution, and analysis of an ambitious modern research project, especially in social and economic history. As an example we can examine the fruitful use of comparison in an ongoing research project on "The Evolution of a 'Traditional' Rural Andean Society: Cuzco from Late Colonial Times until 1969."

The origin of the project, financed by the Swedish SAREC Foundation since 1977, lay in the observation many years ago that the Andean systems of tenant labor (*colonato*) had rather close counterparts in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Northern and Eastern Europe, a theme developed by Mörner (1970, 1979). This "discovery," growing from distant comparison, immediately raised intriguing questions for a Latin Americanist about the relevance of factors such as "colonialism," "racism," and "external dependence" in explaining the *colonato* form of exploitation of the lower rural strata in Latin America—given the absence or near absence of such factors in Northern and Eastern Europe.

Following the identification of the problem to be studied, Grew indicates that comparison can be used to decide "which historical elements from an infinite variety ought to be included . . . to determine the scope of the research" (1980, p. 770). In our case, it soon became clear that the framework of the large estates would not suffice to explain the patterns of continuity and change of the larger agrarian structures of which the *colonato* formed a part. The first step was the choice of Cuzco as the *region* to be investigated due to the availability of documentation and the late survival there of the *colonato*. Research and comparison based primarily, but not exclusively, on quantified data is being carried out at various levels ranging from the individual units of production to districts, provinces, and, finally, the whole region with its main outside markets.⁴⁸ The rich possibilities of intraregional comparison were suggested by the late persistence of the *colonato* form of tenant labor in some provinces of Cuzco (such as Paucartambo) and its early demise or absence in others. Hence, the selection of provinces and districts within Cuzco for in-depth study was made in light of their comparative potential with respect to certain variables such as land tenure, demography, production, and taxed income, which would allow us to test explanatory hypotheses about the *colonato*.

Comparison has also aided in arriving at clearer definitions of basic concepts since, as Grew states, starting research "with fixed categories is to admit approaching history from the outside" (p. 766). One must first grapple with the terms to be found in the sources themselves.⁴⁹ To establish the meaning of the "hacienda" in Cuzco, for example, when it first appears in the late eighteenth century, it is essential to begin by comparing the various units that were so labelled in the

contemporary records. Were sugar, coca, and ranching units of production also covered by the concept? And how about the diachronic dimension? Could it reasonably be inferred, despite the risks inherent in such a use of comparison, that the estates labelled "haciendas" in the 1780s exhibited, on the whole, the same features under other labels a hundred years earlier? Was the term "hacienda" as used in the census of 1876 more or less restricted in its meaning than in the 1780s? In this way, we can arrive at a meaningful definition of the hacienda in Cuzco at different points in time, which can then be roughly compared with the "hacienda" in the Puno or in coastal Peru.

Comparison can help to overcome the obstacles to the analysis of quantitative data often found in preindustrial societies. In Cuzco, a large number of more or less detailed parish reports, containing rather heterogeneous data on population and land tenure, are available for the entire diocese for 1689–90. Only two of them, however, include more or less complete data on the age of the parishioners. One had to be immediately disregarded because of the implausibility of the age data given. The other, on Huaquirca in the province of Aymarás, also showed an extremely skewed age and sex structure. Diachronic comparison with the same and neighboring districts in 1786 and 1876 revealed persisting, though less severe, sex and age imbalances. Given the lack of similar data, synchronic comparison within the Andean region could not be used as a further check. In this instance, distant comparison served to establish the feasibility of Huaquirca's age and sex composition. A surprisingly high degree of similarity was found in the case of the French highland village of Laguiole in 1691 even though, naturally, it did not suffer from the coercive mita variety of labor migration as did Huaquirca. On the basis of these comparisons, it could be concluded that the village's unusual composition was, indeed, feasible and that the data could, with certain reservations, be used for demographic analytical purposes. Given the lack of sources, we could not, of course, establish the degree to which it was representative of the late seventeenth-century Andean context (Mörner 1978a, pp. 9–18).

Comparison is also bound to play an important role in testing explanatory hypotheses. Fairly detailed tax records are available on the central parts of the Cuzco region for the years 1896–97 and 1918, some eleven thousand entries having been processed for computer-assisted research. During this period a process of limited "modernization" is said to have occurred in this rather distant part of the Andean Sierra with the railroad from the coast finally reaching the city of Cuzco in 1908. A hypothetical model of the impact of "modernization," based on the existing literature and descriptive data, can then be formulated. It would include the increase of export production in the plantation area of La Convención and Lares, the accumulation of merchant capital in the

city of Cuzco, the decline of muleteering (*arriería*) in the districts crossed by the railroad, and so forth. The comparative analysis of these tax records, diachronically and synchronically, will serve to test these hypotheses and aid in the formulation of new and more accurate ones.

Cuzco as a whole can be profitably compared with other regions within, or even outside of, Peru such as the neighboring region of Puno, with which Cuzco shares many common features. Interregional comparison can serve, in this regard, to highlight Cuzco's diverging characteristics that are sometimes overlooked in literature when generalizations, based on Puno data alone, are made about the "Southern Peruvian Sierra." In the course of the nineteenth century, Puno had become increasingly linked to Arequipa, a commercial center near the coast that was, in turn, closely tied to the overseas markets for wool. Thus, the export of alpaca wool, produced by Indian communities, and sheep's wool, largely a hacienda product, became an instrument of economic change affecting Puno and the southern-most provinces of the Department of Cuzco. When the railroad from Arequipa and the coast reached Puno in 1876 and Sicuani in southern Cuzco in 1897, Puno's haciendas, relatively few until then, expanded vigorously from the 1890s onwards. In response, Indian uprisings became endemic.

What we know so far about the Cuzco region suggests a very different pattern of economic change or "modernization." Only Cuzco's southern-most provinces were affected by the boom of wool production for sale. In addition, the region's wool producers had an alternative market in the domestic textile industry whose first plant had already been established in 1861. Another pioneering branch of incipient industrialization, the production of beer, was, in turn, to imply the expansion of barley cultivation at the expense of wheat. The arrival of the railroad from the coast to Cuzco in 1908 was to see, in the "ceja de montaña," an increased production of plantation crops like cocoa and coffee in order to supply distant markets. Indian unrest was rather rare in the central parts of the Cuzco region, it seems, the existing pattern of land tenure having already been established by the late seventeenth century. With due regard for Cuzco's distinctiveness, it might nevertheless be useful to test in this case, too, some of the theoretical approaches used in the course of research on Puno, such as Gordon Appleby's (1976) version of "central market theory" or the "sectorial model" constructed by Benjamin Orlove (1977).

"When research leads to the recognition of general patterns, factual hypotheses, or full-fledged theories," Grew has written, "these can again be tested by comparison . . ." (1980, p. 771). To reach a final synthesis in the case of our project will no doubt require comparative analysis in order to establish the right balance between the common and the unique. Comparison will also be essential to suggest the causal forces at

work and to establish more meaningful theories of rural evolution. To date, the social theories that have guided the analysis of rural societies in time and space, whether Marxist or non-Marxist, have too often been based on an assumption of linear progression in history from more primitive to more modern or capitalist conditions.⁵⁰ This evolutionary assumption unavoidably imposes a certain rigidity on the analysis of rural society in Latin America where change has by no means always followed this course. In the case of Cuzco, we have already found that the degree of commercialization, for example, was more advanced in the eighteenth century than it was in the nineteenth. One of the participants of our research group, the Swedish economic historian Roland Anrup (forthcoming), is making an ambitious attempt to construct a more flexible conceptual apparatus, primarily for the analysis of Andean labor systems, which avoids the assumption of a linear progression. His categories also allow for a more realistic view of landholding versus "landless" status.

We hope that our work on Cuzco will stimulate comparison of rural societies throughout the Third World and that future studies will demonstrate greater flexibility, objectivity, and precision within a more realistic theoretical framework than is possible at the present time.

NOTES

1. For an abbreviated version in English, see Lane and Riemersma (1953), pp. 494–521.
2. As quoted in Lane and Riemersma (1953), p. 498.
3. *Annales*, the famous French journal founded by Bloch and Lucien Febvre in 1929, pioneered in the forceful promotion of comparative approaches to history long before the CSSH. Bendix (1968) relates the renewed interest in comparative studies of social change in the United States to the worldwide American political involvement since World War II (p. 67).
4. Another ambitious work, using a comparative approach in order to arrive at a synthesis, by historian Barrington Moore, Jr. (1966), proved less controversial among historians. In his work on the dynamics of "modernization," historian Cyril E. Black (1966) relies on the "comparative method" to produce a categorization of all the countries of the world. In the present article we systematically distinguish between "historians" and "social scientists." This does not imply any stance on the issue of whether history is a social science or not. It is merely done for greater clarity. For the relationship, see also Lorwin (1968) and Bonnell (1980).
5. As quoted in Lane and Riemersma (1953), p. 495.
6. As Febvre noted (1929) in the first volume of what was then called *Annales d'histoire économique et sociale*: "De cette Amérique du Sud qui, pendant si longtemps, a vécu dans un isolement relatif ou en tous cas dans l'ignorance totale des civilisations européennes, la nature et l'histoire on fait pour nous un champs précieux d'expériences et de comparaisons" (p. 278). Until 1949, 5 percent of the articles published in that journal was devoted to Latin America, a remarkably high proportion at that time (Martinière 1980, p. 134). Genovese (1970) has observed that generalizations come under better control when a comparative perspective is used, enriching both national and regional history. Comparison can serve to integrate Latin America into world history and also helps to place its history in the context of the historical development of modern capitalism. In his study of "feudalism" or "capitalism" in colonial Latin America, Slicher van Bath (1974) concludes that it fits neither model. He makes a

- plea, however, for external comparison with coeval developments in European agrarian societies.
7. For a synthesis see Redlich (1958), p. 362. See also Etzioni and Dubow (1970), especially the introduction, and Sjöberg, "The Comparative Method in the Social Sciences," pp. 25–39.
 8. An Australian historian, John Fogarty, has recently tried to distinguish between a "comparative method as a means of testing explanatory hypotheses" and a "comparative perspective . . . as a means of provoking the imagination" (Fogarty 1981, p. 413). We have not found this a useful distinction, however, since the former is merely one of several valid scholarly uses of comparison as we understand it.
 9. Long ago, Ernst Bernheim (1903) rejected the notion of a specific "comparative method," on a lower level of analysis, when sources are being compared (pp. 409, 565). Among those still pleading for the term "comparative method" is Sewell (1967), especially pp. 216ff.
 10. Bloch as quoted in Lane and Riemersma (1953), p. 498. Topolski (1976), p. 471. See also, on a more sophisticated level, Fischer (1970), pp. 56–58, who finds that some comparative studies suffer from what he calls "the fallacy of appositional proof." By this he means "an attempt to establish the existence of a quality in A by contrast with a quality in B—and B is misrepresented or misunderstood." He points out, however, that this fallacy mostly appears in works that "are not avowedly comparative but implicitly and erroneously so."
 11. A point made in the excellent contribution by Grew (1980), pp. 769ff.
 12. "The use of comparison in historical research can be equivalent to synthesis" (Berkhofer 1971, p. 378).
 13. Comparative analysis, "poses no unique methodological obstacles—the methodological problems are those of all social scientific investigation. Because of its focus on *dissimilar* units, however, some of these problems are posed in especially complicated and intractable fashion" (Smelser 1976, p. 162).
 14. Grew (1980) stresses that "many of the benefits of comparison" can result even when "the cases compared have not been investigated at equal depth" (p. 767). If this is done beyond a purely exploratory stage, the risks are great. For interesting viewpoints on these problems, see the anthropologist Hammel (1980), who takes up the specific problems of the historians who have to rely on written sources only. He recommends, for example, that computerized information be entered into data banks in as primitive a form as possible and that research documentation be publicly available.
 15. See, e.g., Eisenstadt (1963), p. 420. Compare with the approach of social psychologists, mainly interested in cultural variations, Lambert and Weisbrod (1971), p. 4.
 16. For an excellent bibliography see Garfin (1971).
 17. Sometimes, the use of distant comparisons in history is simply dismissed as a scholarly analytical procedure. Cardoso (1975a) presents a more nuanced view. In the first place, he warns of the danger of confounding superficial analogies with profound differences in this kind of comparison, but he also states that experience shows "la fertilidad de tal enfoque cuando se lo emplea adecuadamente es decir tomando en cuenta las estructuras sociales globales y los contextos históricos diferenciales." Cf. Grew (1980), p. 776.
 18. See also Tägil (1977), pp. 65ff and Hroch (1971). Slicher van Bath goes on to say that the problem of diachronic comparison is not so much the distance in chronological time as such but with respect to the economic and industrial development that has taken place (1967, p. 176). He also states that a difference in development may turn a chronologically synchronic comparison into a diachronic one. This, in our opinion, leads to a blurring of concepts.
 19. Puhle (1980) emphasizes strongly that, without theory, explicit comparison in history is impossible and meaningless. After discussing various general social theories, he reaches the conclusion that, usually, theoretical eclecticism is an advantage rather than a disadvantage from the point of historical comparison (p. 134).
 20. Talcott Parsons, *The Social System* (1951), and other works largely inspired by Durk-

- heim, and Weber. Smelser (1976) discusses the comparative methodologies of Toqueville, Durkheim, and Weber.
21. See, for example, Kula (1973), p. 574, who warns of the risks when Marxist dialectics are superficially applied to the comparison of structurally different phenomena. See also Wallerstein (1974). Like ourselves, Grew (1980) concludes that "on the whole, historical comparison seems most effective at a kind of middle range" (p. 773). See also Fredrickson (1980), p. 461.
 22. See especially Hanke (1964) and Griffin (1961). Mexican historian Silvio Zavala, author of the corresponding volume on the colonial period, synthesizes his view, with admirable comparative sense, in "A General View of the Colonial History of the New World" in Cline (1967), pp. 195–206. For an early comparative effort, see Lima (1966), a series of lectures comparing the evolution of Brazil with that of Spanish and "Anglo-Saxon" America at Stanford University in 1912. For a recent comparison of the two colonial systems see Lang (1975).
 23. The tendency in comparative slavery studies to strive for some "grand elaborate theory" of slavery and race relations has been criticized by Lombardi (1974) and Mörner (1978b), while Lombardi praises the many contributions to the debate for their efforts at overcoming "methodological and conceptual shortcomings." See also Genovese (1970), pp. 317–27; the comparative studies reproduced in Foner and Genovese (1969); and, e.g., Hall (1971), Cohen and Greene (1972), and Bowser (1975). Mörner (1967) stresses the usefulness of comparisons between Jesuit slaveholdings in various parts of Latin America because of the identical institutional framework. Efforts to arrive at an understanding of race relations after abolition in the Americas have also turned to the use of comparison, most notably in Degler's study of race relations in the United States and Brazil (1971). See also Skidmore (1972). Andrews (1980), pp. 201–8, in his study of the "Afro-Argentines" of nineteenth-century Buenos Aires, attempts to extend Degler's comparison to Argentina, an atypical area of Spanish America in general. See also Mörner (1973).
 24. We have systematically examined about twenty major journals. Some articles were found, such as Kinsbruner (1978), that did not pursue a clearly comparative purpose despite titles and/or statements to that effect. We also, of course, examined book-length comparative studies.
 25. Murra (1970) emphasizes the danger of "spurious analogies" when comparing the Incas and Aztecs, since "both areas were reported on by Europeans from the same cultural background . . . The risk of analogies that existed in the background of the chroniclers and not in the cultures they watched will be reduced if one has begun the comparison with a society of similar complexity outside the American continent" (p. 17).
 26. Love (1974), Maclachlan (1974), Katzman (1975, 1977), Waterbury (1975), Love (1980), Levine (1978), Wirth (1977). Tulchin (1978) has carried out a regional comparison of the distribution of rural credit in Argentina, 1910–26. On the other hand, the study of Hardoy and Langdon (1978) on the growth of regional inequality in Argentina, Chile, and Costa Rica has considerable comparative potential that the authors, surprisingly, do not exploit. Something similar could be said of Altman and Lockhart (1976). Klein's study (1975) of the districts of Chulumani and Pacajes in Alto Peru in 1786 provides an example of comparison on a lower geographic/administrative level. Grieshaber (1980) carried out a quantitative comparison for Bolivia, 1838–77, on both departmental and provincial levels, based on Indian taxpayer lists.
 27. Spalding (1977) uses an implicitly comparative approach in his survey of Latin American labor, while Skidmore (1979) does so explicitly. "The recent spurt in research," Skidmore says, "has created a more secure base for carefully formulated, if necessarily tentative, comparative analysis" (pp. 87–88). His stimulating, if sketchy, comparison of elite/worker conflict and accommodation in Argentina, Brazil, and Chile between 1900 and 1930 raises interesting questions which, as the author states, "a single-country focus might miss" (p. 89).
 28. The study of Boyse-Cassagne and Gómez y Gómez (1976) compares the Muisca of Colombia with the Collao of Bolivia and the Spanish conquest of both peoples. Their inquiry, examining two societies with profoundly different structures, does not pro-

- duce significant results. A study by Lucena Salmoral (1972) simply shows which of three rival bands of conquerors got most of the *encomiendas* and offices in New Granada. Not surprisingly, it was that of Gonzalo Jiménez de Quesada.
29. Higginbotham (1978), quote from p. 239. See also Morris, Vázquez and Tribulse (1976), an interesting and useful collection of documents relevant to the study of the two "revolutions." Two other studies have been reported, Detweiler and Ruiz (1980?) and Davis (1980?). By March 1981, they had still not been cataloged at the Library of Congress.
 30. From a nuanced Marxist point of view, Kossok (1969) analyzes the similarities and differences of the "Iberian Revolutionary Cycle," 1789–1830. At the University of Leipzig, GDR, a group for comparative research on the history of "bourgeois and bourgeois-democratic revolutions" has devoted considerable attention to Latin America; see Kossok, ed. (1969, 1976). See also, on another level, the comparative study of Pérotin (1975), which focuses on revolutionary local institutional innovations, the *Comités de surveillance* of Guadeloupe (1793), and the Cuban *Juntas de vigilancia* (1809).
 31. In another comparative essay on urban and industrial growth in Mexico and Brazil, Mauro (1975) frankly concedes that structural differences prevail over the similarities. His comparison of the growth process in the two countries thus tends also to focus on features at a high level of generality.
 32. Phelan (1959). In a similar way Klein's (1980), pp. 201, 207, assumption that the *Yanacona* serfs of Alto Peruvian haciendas and the slaves of the plantations of the American South played the same role in generating wealth is contradicted by a study on another Andean district. Mörner (1979), pp. 208–10, 227–28, has shown that hacendado income in 1830 was correlated with the degree of market access and not with the number of tenant laborers (*colonos*).
 33. In a more recent contribution, Mörner (1980), at the request of the Swedish Lapps (*Sami*) in their lawsuit against the state, compares the evolution of their landrights with that of the landrights of the Indians of Spanish America. In this mainly legal matter, the difference in size is of far less import.
 34. Wirth and Jones (1978). In the introduction, Wirth rightly asks: "Can we in fact compare two capitalist industrial cities at different points in time, in divergent national contexts, with different roles in the world economy?" His own answer is "yes and no," and he points to five different issues on which he believes comparison to be justified. He also identifies a number of "new" questions raised by the comparisons. On the other hand, Richard M. Morse, in his essay on mental responses to industrialism, simply declares that the two cities constitute "logical subjects for comparison because both were loci for unexampled bursts of industrialism with all its concomitants, Manchester for the West, and São Paulo a century later for the Third World" (p. 7).
 35. Among definitions of the "frontier" concepts in literature are: the "cutting edge" frontier of Turner; Owen Lattimore's frontiers of exclusion and inclusion; the U.S. Bureau of Statistics definition of the "frontier" as an area with a population density of less than two persons per square mile; Leyburn's small farm, settlement plantation, exploitation plantation and mining camp frontiers; Katzman's (1975) subsistence versus export propelled frontier; Gerhard's (1959) closed versus open and trader versus settler's frontiers. Two sociologists define it as "boundaries beyond the sphere of the routine of centrally located violence-producing enterprises" (Baretta and Markoff 1978, p. 590).
 36. Van Oss (1978) studied the development of colonial bishoprics in Spanish America to find, with the help of available quantified data, that they paralleled the over-all development of the different areas of the Spanish Empire. A similar approach is used by Slicher van Bath (1979) on the basis of quantified data from the chronicles of Juan López de Velasco and Antonio Vázquez de Espinosa.
 37. Although less explicitly comparative, Della Cava's excellent study (1968) of two Mes- sianic movements in Northeastern Brazil fulfilled a similar function.
 38. As quoted in Lane and Riemersma (1953), p. 515.
 39. See also Knowlton (1969) who compares the expropriation of Church property in

- nineteenth-century Mexico and Colombia. He examines only the Liberal and not the Conservative side of the debate. Also, he does not take up the question of the social bases and coalitions behind the conflict in the two countries. For an earlier effort of comparing nineteenth-century Church developments in Chile and Peru, see Pike (1967).
40. Her extensive work on Spanish and Portuguese administration in the New World (1952) also had a comparative approach.
 41. As quoted in Lane and Riemersma (1953), p. 520.
 42. Kay uses the term "Gutsherrschaft" when it should be "Gutswirtschaft."
 43. For a revised version, see Mörner (1979), pp. 161–86.
 44. As quoted by Lane and Riemersma (1953), p. 507.
 45. Social scientists have shown more interest. See, for example, Walton (1977). The weakness of studies based on secondary material for one side of the comparison is especially striking in Palmier's study of the Javanese nobility under the Dutch (1960), in which he includes comments drawing upon the results of Gibson's article (1960) on the fate of the Aztec aristocracy in colonial Mexico.
 46. Love's earlier study on Rio Grande do Sul (1971) deals with the same period and issues but falls outside the strictly comparative project launched at the time of its publication. Pang, in his study (1979) of oligarchical politics for the same period in the Brazilian state of Bahia, uses comparison to study how political bosses varied from area to area within the state, establishing a useful typology.
 47. Germán W. Rama also makes a quick sketch comparing Uruguay and New Zealand in Fogarty et al. (1979, pp. 235–41). An article by Dyster (1979) concludes that the differences in development between Argentina and Australia basically "derive from differences in the conformation and needs of capital functioning within the one international exchange economy." Moran (1970–71) compares the role of the Radical party in the development process of Argentina with that of the Labor party in Australia. A comparison of Uruguay and New Zealand by geographer Kirby (1975) should also be noted. Hidden under the surface of many striking parallels are found differences in agrarian structures. The author does not take up another important difference, however—the size of the main agglomeration.
 48. Problems in the comparison of quantitative data are dealt with by Browning and Robinson (1977). See also Grew (1980), p. 772, on demography.
 49. Our work on this thorny task has borne out Døvring's expectation that comparison will help us to arrive at "clearer definitions of basic concepts" (1965, p. 7).
 50. Ernesto Laclau (1969), for example, uses the concept of modes of production to explain why the divergent ways of integration of Argentina and Chile with the world market from 1850 to 1930 produced full employment in the first case, mass unemployment in the latter. To do this, Laclau contrasts the dependent capitalist character of Argentina with the "feudal" character of the Chilean rural sector, an undeniable simplification of reality. This should be contrasted with the more cautious application of Marxist categories in a comparative perspective by Kossok (1973, pp. 1–30). Non-Marxist "modernization" theory suffers from comparable weakness when confronted with historical reality. For critiques, see Bendix (1967) and Tippo (1973).

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