

Urban History Review Revue d'histoire urbaine

URBAN HISTORY REVIEW
REVUE D'HISTOIRE URBAINE

Button, James W. *Black Violence: Political Impact of the 1960s Riots*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978. Pp. xii, 179. Methodological appendices, index. \$16.00

Joy Woolfrey

Volume 8, Number 2, October 1979

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1019386ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019386ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (print)

1918-5138 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this review

Woolfrey, J. (1979). Review of [Button, James W. *Black Violence: Political Impact of the 1960s Riots*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978. Pp. xii, 179. Methodological appendices, index. \$16.00]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 8(2), 124–126. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1019386ar>

remaining indices focus upon the characteristics of such town leaders, measuring the size of the leadership pool and the leaders' tenure of office.

The typology of towns which Cook distills from these measurements is congruent with the basic tenets of central place theory. There was a hierarchy of towns. In major urban centers, such as Boston and Providence, specialization in office-holding characterized developed political structures manned largely by "new" men. Next, there were major county towns. One or two families dominated the narrow elites of these local marketing and service centers. Power was less concentrated in the third type of community, the secondary rural centers, and it was quite diffuse in the "small, self-contained farming villages." Cook finds this type "characterized by a consistently egalitarian social order" (p. 179). Finally, there were frontier towns. Unformed and changing rapidly, these communities represented an early stage of the first four types rather than a truly distinct category.

The typology of towns is central to Cook's study, but to that core he ties an exploration of the role of religion and of the influence of family. Membership in the Congregational Church was not a prerequisite for leadership. Equally significant, Cook observes that, as there were types of towns, there were degrees of deference. This observation, and Cook's reference to the anthropological concepts of the great and little traditions, leads the reader to anticipate that the full range of New England's political culture will unfold in The Fathers of the Towns, revealing, perhaps, varieties of paternalism. It does not. Although Cook might have digested his massive data by means of multiple regressions and eta correlations, the weakness of his fine study is not statistical. Rather it lies in the book's failure to tell us if and how the colonists perceived their position in the hierarchy of town types, thereby refining the egalitarian and consensual model developed in Michael Zuckerman's Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century (New York, 1970). We have instead a convincing but pale and external chart of power linkages on the town, county and provincial levels. The chart is nevertheless well wrought and demands that historians add the color of human thought and feeling.

Professor Craig Hanyon
Department of History
Brock University

* * *

Button, James W. Black Violence: Political Impact of the 1960s Riots. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1978. Pp. xii, 179. Methodological appendices, index. \$16.00

Black Violence is a study of the United States Government's reaction to the black protest movement of the 1960s. Following the model of comparative community analysis to which his thesis advisor, Robert Lineberry, has contributed, Button uses the statistical techniques of regression and path analysis to try and show if and how variation in riot intensity and number of riots in 40 cities affected expenditures of the government's Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO), and its Departments of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), Justice and Defence. To compliment this analysis he also conducted a series of interviews with officials in these departments and in two of the cities from his sample.

Button separated the riots into three periods: 1963-66, 1967-68, and 1969-72. Controlling (though not systematically) for the influence of variables such as size of city and income levels, he looked at each agency's expenditure, sometimes programme by programme. He discovered that during the early period number and intensity of riots in a city did result in greater OEO, HEW and HUD expenditures. Later they didn't. By then total riot expenditures for the five agencies had decreased, though those of Justice and Defence had increased--as they funded the stockpiling of large weapons arsenals, particularly in those cities where police had precipitated riots by killing blacks.

According to Gabriel Almond the special mission of political science is to understand and solve the problem of violence and coercion in human affairs. Button wishes to contribute to a theory of state response to domestic violence but he has no general theory of the state within which to develop this contribution. It is difficult to know what to make of his effort to explain changes in government expenditures in terms of a simple conservative, liberal and radical (confusingly defined) typology of attitudes towards black violence. This is in fact not explanation but another level of description. It does not tell us much to have the early government response labelled "liberal-radical," the intermediate one "liberal," and the later one "conservative."

Button needs to look at changes in expenditure patterns of the government agencies he is studying not only in relation to the riots but also in relation to changes in the function of government expenditures in the general economy. As this function changes so does the state's emphasis on repressive techniques of social control.

Understanding these changes is equally important for answering the other side of the question, namely the utility of collective violence as a strategy of change for dispossessed minorities. Button does assume, though he does not demonstrate, that the position of blacks in American society is better in the 1970s than it was at the beginning of the 1960s. If this is the case, we still cannot conclude from his study that collective violence contributed to this end. Furthermore, Button contradicts his assumption that certain kinds of government expenditures have helped the black community and that others have hurt it in his comments on specific programmes: the anti-riot summer youth employment schemes of OEO, urban renewal, education grants from HEW--most of which clearly went to others than blacks.

The constraints of the statistical techniques which are central to this study and the perhaps related absence of an adequate theoretical framework prevent the author from posing his problems coherently and from successfully integrating the large amount of information he has collected. Black Violence will be worth reading for some because of this information. For others it may prove interesting as an exercise in the application of regression and path analysis. It will give limited satisfaction to those trying to understand the social and historical significance of the black protest movement in the United States, and the government's reaction to it.

Joy Woolfrey
Department of Regional Planning
University of Ottawa

* * *

Phillips, Carla Rahn. Ciudad Real, 1500-1750: Growth, Crisis and Readjustment in the Spanish Economy. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1979. Pp. 190. \$16.50.

Few geographical regions are immortalized through literary masterpieces; among those which have gained this distinction is La Mancha, an area of Spain immediately south of the city of Toledo. La Mancha presents a bleak and monotonous landscape; consequently it provided Miguel Cervantes with a perfect setting for his novel, Don Quixote. Its vastness lent scope to the exploits of a knight-errant and its disturbing emptiness captured the vacuity of the chivalric ideal in early seventeenth century Spain. As appropriate as Cervantes' La Mancha was to the theme of his novel, it was not simply the product of his artistic imagination. Rather, his depiction faithfully reflected the reality of a countryside--the flatest in Spain--where settlements were, and continue to be, nucleated, sparse, and widely dispersed.

Pre-eminent among these settlements is Ciudad Real. To the extent that Ciudad Real was deliberately founded and its growth carefully fostered by Alfonso X (the Wise) at the beginning of the thirteenth century, it warranted its name. The city was inherently royal; in La Mancha it was intended to serve as a royalist stronghold and to act as a counterweight and deterrent to the pretensions of the Order of Calatrava--one of Spain's leading military orders--which dominated this reconquered territory. However, Ciudad Real hardly qualified to be called a city. During the period 1500-1750, its population, which can be estimated only very roughly, hovered somewhere between six and twelve thousand at its peak--that is before the expulsion of some two or three thousand moriscos in 1610. By early modern European standards Ciudad Real was no more than a moderately sized town, a regional centre of little national or inter-