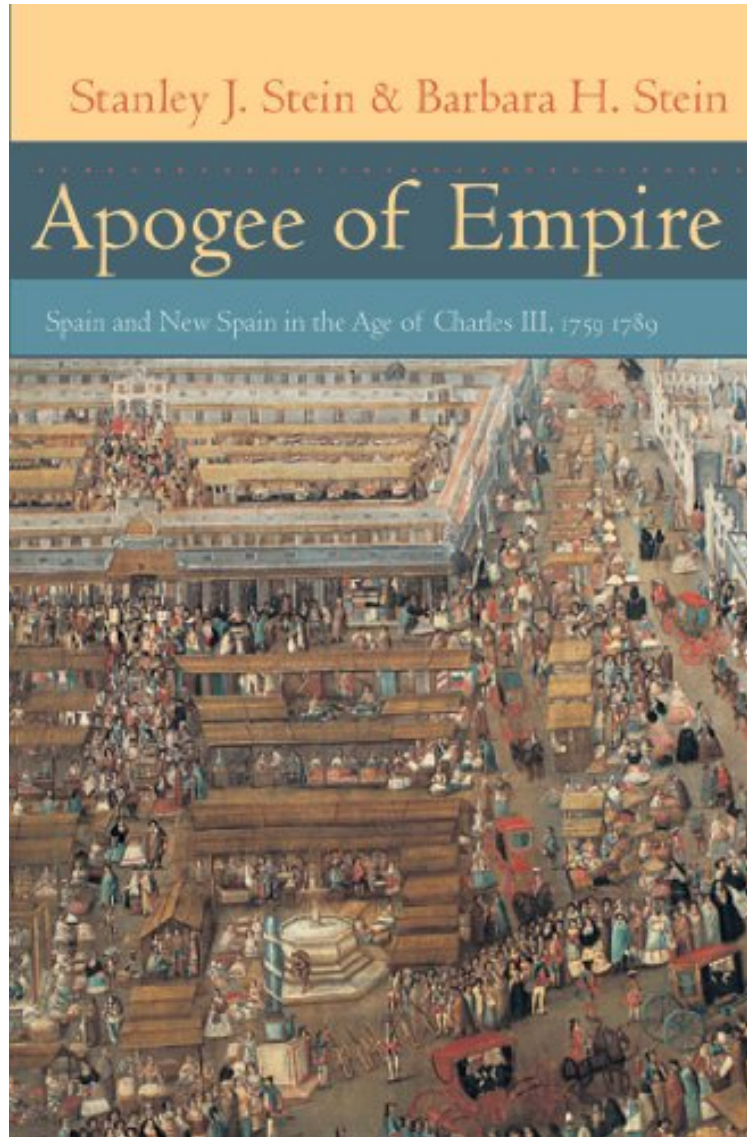


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Apogee of Empire

Stanley J Stein, Barbara H. Stein
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Stanley J Stein, Barbara H. Stein : Apogee of Empire before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Apogee of Empire:

Once Europe's supreme maritime power, Spain by the mid-eighteenth century was facing fierce competition from England and France. England, in particular, had successfully mustered the financial resources necessary to confront its Atlantic rivals by mobilizing both aristocracy and merchant bourgeoisie in support of its imperial ambitions. Spain,

meanwhile, remained overly dependent on the profits of its New World silver mines to finance both metropolitan and colonial imperatives, and England's naval superiority constantly threatened the vital flow of specie. When Charles III ascended the Spanish throne in 1759, then, after a quarter-century as ruler of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, Spain and its colonial empire were seriously imperiled. Two hundred years of Hapsburg rule, followed by a half-century of ineffectual Bourbon "reforms," had done little to modernize Spain's increasingly antiquated political, social, economic, and intellectual institutions. Charles III, recognizing the pressing need to renovate these institutions, set his Italian staff—most notably the Marquis de Esquilache, who became Secretary of the Consejo de Hacienda (the Exchequer)—to this formidable task. In *Apogee of Empire*, Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein trace the attempt, initially under Esquilache's direction, to reform the Spanish establishment and, later, to modify and modernize the relationship between the metropole and its colonies. Within Spain, Charles and his architects of reform had to be mindful of determining what adjustments could be made that would help Spain confront its enemies without also radically altering the Hapsburg inheritance. As described in impressive detail by the authors, the bitter, seven-year conflict that ensued between reformers and traditionalists ended in a coup in 1766 that forced Charles to send Esquilache back to Italy. After this setback at home, Charles still hoped to effect constructive change in Spain's imperial system, primarily through the incremental implementation of a policy of *comercio libre* (free-trade). These reforms, made half-heartedly at best, failed as well, and by 1789 Spain would find itself ill prepared for the coming decades of upheaval in Europe and America. An in-depth study of incremental response by an old imperial order to challenges at home and abroad, *Apogee of Empire* is also a sweeping account of the personalities, places, and policies that helped to shape the modern Atlantic world.

"A monumental contribution to our knowledge and understanding of the inner workings of the eighteenth-century Spanish Empire." (J. H. Elliott *New York Times Book Review*) "A major work of considerable scholarship and valuable insight... It should be in every library concerned with Spanish history." (Jeremy Black *Journal of Maritime Research*) "Few books in recent decades have been so successful in mining a vast amount of primary material in order to evoke the arguments and counter arguments that shaped policy in an Ancien Régime monarchy. The authors' account of the crisis of 1766 is stunning in its detail and mastery of political infighting." (David Ringrose *EH.Net*) "Based on prodigious original research over several decades, these volumes [*Silver, Trade, and War* and *Apogee of Empire*, both by Stanley J. Stein and Barbara H. Stein] do much to unravel the paradox of Spain's resilience as a great power during the eighteenth century." (Foreign Affairs) "It resonates with the emphasis economic historians have recently accorded to institutional influences on economic development and stagnation." (Choice) "An impressive work of massive proportion. It reflects extended, deep thinking about the nature of the imperial system and equally deep pursuit of the historical actors' motives. Every student of the eighteenth century in Spain and the colonies should read this book; more than any previous examination it forces reconsideration of the causes, nature, effects, and even terminology of the 'Bourbon Reforms.'" (Mark A. Burkholder *The Americas*) "This book has been eagerly awaited from two authors who are widely respected in their field... This critical period for Spain is brilliantly recounted." (British Bulletin of Publications on Latin America, the Caribbean, Portugal, and Spain) "The gracefully written *Apogee of Empire* is masterfully crafted from a wide and learned vantage point. The authors have made valuable and unique contributions to the understanding of the Spanish trade policy in the eighteenth century." (John Jay TePaske, Duke University) "The source of a wealth of political and economic insights, and facts." (Paul Jordan *British Journal for 18th-Century Studies*) "Stanley and Barbara Stein's book meticulous in its detail and far-reaching in its international implications will be a classic." (Nancy Vogeley *Eighteenth-Century Studies*) "A very well-written book, with a clear and accessible style... A significant contribution to our understanding of early modern Spain, European history, and colonialism." (Wayne H. Bowen *Canadian Journal of History*) " *Apogee of Empire* is no doubt a book everybody interested in Charles's reign should read." (Antonio Feros *Journal of Modern History*) "Ambitious and erudite history." (Carlos Marichal *Historian*) "Anyone interested in fundamental themes of eighteenth-century Spanish history... will find much that is new and stimulating in this book." (Anthony McFarlane *Journal of Latin American Studies*) "Will reward and reader interested in the eighteenth-century Atlantic world and the Bourbon reforms." (Kendall W. Brown *American Historical*) "The gracefully written *Apogee of Empire* is masterfully crafted from a wide and learned vantage point. The authors have made valuable and unique contributions to the understanding of the Spanish trade policy in the eighteenth century." (John Jay TePaske, Duke University) About the Author Stanley J. Stein is the Walter Samuel Carpenter III Professor in Spanish Culture and Civilization, emeritus, at Princeton University. His publications include *Vassouras: A Brazilian Coffee County, 1850–1900* and (with Roberto Crotos Conde) *Latin America: A Guide to Economic History, 1830–1930*. Barbara H. Stein is an independent historian and former bibliographer for Latin America, Spain, and Portugal at Princeton University's Firestone Library. The authors previously collaborated on *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America* and *Silver, Trade, and War: Spain and America in the Making of Early Modern Europe*, the latter available from Johns Hopkins.