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Jonathan C. Brown

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# A Socioeconomic History of Argentina, 1776–1860

JONATHAN C. BROWN

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE

LONDON NEW YORK MELBOURNE

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town, Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi

Cambridge University Press

The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 8RU, UK

Published in the United States of America by Cambridge University Press, New York

[www.cambridge.org](http://www.cambridge.org)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9780521222198](http://www.cambridge.org/9780521222198)

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First published 1979

This digitally printed version 2008

*A catalogue record for this publication is available from the British Library*

*Library of Congress Cataloguing in Publication data*

Brown, Jonathan C., 1942–

A socioeconomic history of Argentina, 1776–1860.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Argentine Republic – Economic conditions.
2. Argentine Republic – Social conditions. I. Title.

HC175.B77 330.9'82 78–6800

ISBN 978-0-521-22219-8 hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-10210-0 paperback

Cambridge University Press

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## Preface

Argentina's historical development is enigmatic. Were this not so, Argentines today would not be puzzled about how a past of much potential became a present of such disillusionment. The natural tendency, therefore, has been to restudy that past and to conclude that it did not contain as much potential as first imagined. In this line of historical writing, authors sometimes trace the present civil unrest directly to the "inequities" and "structural defects" of the nation's historical development. They say that the development of economic and social "dependency" in the nineteenth century formed the historical foundation for the recent confrontation between the military government and youthful revolutionaries. Growth and structure of the economy more than a century ago remains a controversial issue even today.

If the reader seeks in this book a confirmation of Argentina's past socioeconomic discrepancies, he or she may not be satisfied. I attempt here to analyze economic and social changes that occurred more than a century ago. I do not find those transformations to have been entirely negative in their portent. Nor am I able to trace so easily the problems of today's Argentina – particularly the political ones – to the economic and social solutions reached by nineteenth-century Argentines or to the import–export economy of that time. Nevertheless, even if more recent events have determined today's problems in Argentina, my story of nineteenth-century socioeconomic growth may be important for that very reason.

Every author of a historical treatise such as this one is indebted to innumerable patrons. My own debt extends to those who have collected and preserved source materials at the Archivo General de la Nación and the Museo Bartolomé Mitre in Buenos Aires, the Latin American Collection of the University of Texas, the New York City Library, and the Peabody Library of Harvard University. A Fulbright-Hays grant from the Department of Health, Education, and Wel-

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fare enabled me to complete a year's research in Buenos Aires. This manuscript is much improved for the encouragement and (constructive) criticism of Lynore Brown, my most prescient editor. She remains the only person who read the entire manuscript before it was sent to the publisher. (Is she, therefore, an accomplice?) Frank and Cynthia Brown and Max and Ethel Gruber encouraged me throughout the researching and writing of this book. Thomas F. McGann and W. W. Rostow offered wise counsel on the earliest and roughest drafts of the first eight chapters. Special thanks goes to Jason Brown who, as an aspiring editor, tore up an early draft of Chapters 1 and 2. They are better for the rewriting. Those who have helped me in Argentina and in the United States are (in alphabetical order): Luis A. Arocena, Carol Dack, Elsa Elías, Karl Graeber, Richard Graham, Donna Guy, Brenda and Garth Hemming, Diana Hernando, Ruth Kibrik, David Landes, Magnus Mörner, Juan Carlos Nicolau, Eduardo Saguier, Alberto Schwartz, Ron Seckinger, Tom Seidel, Susan Socolow, Steve Topik, John Tutino, and Carol Wood-Garces. Jane Tutino and Tom Eisenhower drew the maps, and personnel of the University of California, Santa Barbara, photo lab reproduced the pictures. My thanks to them all. I hope they are not disappointed with the results of their counsel and aid.

JCB