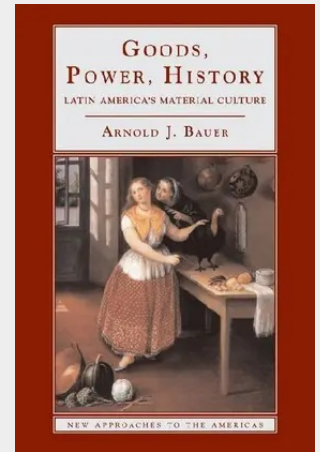


Goods, Power, History

Why do we acquire the things we do? Behind this apparently ingenuous question are several answers, some straightforward and others more interesting. To feed ourselves, might be the first response, for we can easily see that we expend much energy in the quest for food. Clothing and shelter as well would seem to constitute our basic needs. Yet we quickly see that even in the Garden of Eden, people want more than they need. This simple impulse has created the ever-mounting abundance we call progress and nearly all of the subsequent trouble on our planet. Four main interwoven themes run through this exploration of material culture and consumption in Latin America over the past five centuries: supply and demand; the relationships between consumption and identity; the importance of ritual, both ancient and modern, in what we buy; and the relationship between colonial and post-colonial power in consumption.

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