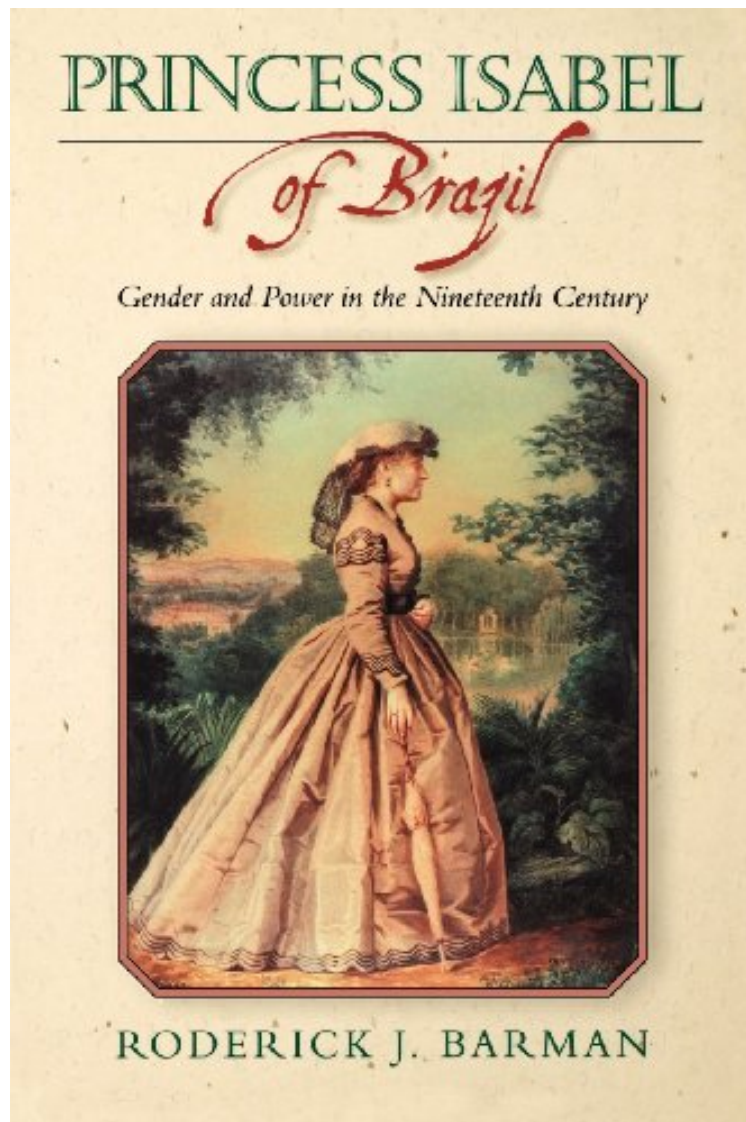


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Princess Isabel of Brazil: Gender and Power in the Nineteenth Century (Latin American Silhouettes)

Roderick J. Barman

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Roderick J. Barman : Princess Isabel of Brazil: Gender and Power in the Nineteenth Century (Latin American Silhouettes) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Princess Isabel of Brazil: Gender and Power in the Nineteenth Century (Latin American Silhouettes):

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. Heroine for All Lovers of FreedomBy ChimonsoDona Isabel is an

unjustly neglected figure in Latin American and world history. Barman's well-researched study will do much to restore her to scholarly attention, though it is less likely to reach a popular audience. Isabel achieved two primary distinctions. As regent for her father Pedro II, she was the first modern female head of state in the Americas. Second and more important, she contributed significantly to slavery's demise in Brazil, the last Western Hemisphere state to abolish that institution (though not the practice, which still persists today). During her first regency in 1871-72 she encouraged and aided passage of the Law of Free Womb, freeing all slave-born children from 1871. In her third stint as regent (1887-88) she supported and signed the Ley Aurea (Golden Law) of May 13, 1888, finally abolishing slavery in a country where it had flourished for centuries. It is tempting to assume that Isabel sought these changes behind Pedro's back, but Brazil's "bourgeois emperor" was progressive on that issue, though also a cautious gradualist. Brazil still celebrates 5/13 as a national holiday, one with great meaning for black Brazilians (cf. C.M. de Jesus, "Child of the Dark"); but Afro-Brazilians increasingly deplore the denial of freedom's promise. Slaves themselves played major roles in abolishing that status (read the unforgettable documents in R.E. Conrad ed, "Children of God's Fire"), so it is somewhat misleading to focus on the elite politics of abolition. As Frederick Douglass memorably noted, those "who would be free must themselves strike the first blow." And, in Brazil, the last as well. Unfortunately some parts of the book are boring, but that is instructive in itself. Many hereditary 19C elites, especially royalty, were personally dull and led boring lives due to circumscribed routines and pampered indolence. Isabel yearned for a larger permanent role in state affairs, but apart from her regencies Pedro successfully limited her contributions --- a pity, since she was able and politically astute. As Barman's subtitle suggests, her gender limited her power. She nevertheless left a crucial mark in history, an all-too-rare instance of a woman who really did shape past and present alike. As for slavery in contemporary Brazil, *A Luta Continua* ("the struggle continues"), and Dona Isabel still inspires it.

As the elder daughter of an emperor whose wife had presented him with no sons, Isabel stood to inherit the monarchy of Brazil with the passing of Dom Pedro II. On three separate occasions, Isabel was named regent, or head of state, when her father was required to leave the country for extended periods. On each occasion, she served as the dutiful daughter, following her father's instructions to the letter and resisting any attempts at personal aggrandizement. During her third regency, as her father recuperated in Europe, rather than accumulate personal power and oppose the forces of republicanism and abolition, Isabel personally led the struggle to pass the Gold Law of 1888 abolishing slavery throughout Brazil, thus ridding the country of one of the institutions upon which traditional monarchical Brazil was based and speeding the downfall of the monarchy, the monarchy she would inherit, in 1889. Princess Isabel of Brazil examines Isabel's role as an extraordinary woman who had access to material wealth and education and power, in patriarchal nineteenth-century Brazil. Professor Barman looks at how her life was constrained by her subordinate roles as daughter, wife, mother, and even as empress-in-waiting, using the fascinating career of Isabel to examine the interplay of gender and power in the nineteenth century. This new book is an excellent resource for courses biography, women's studies, and Latin American history courses.

A classic on nineteenth-century Brazil history. Meticulously researched and written in an engaging style. A valuable vehicle for understanding the complexities of politics and culture in nineteenth-century Brazil. (James N. Green, California State University, Long Beach) The 'heroine' of Brazilian abolition emerges in this excellent portrait as a strong-minded woman who battled formidable gender constraints. Her life tells much about power, politics, and family in Victorian Brazil. (Thomas Skidmore, Brown University) This fascinating study of Princess Isabel's relations with her family and her nation, much of it in her own words, provides an unparalleled account of the routines, worries, and aspirations of Brazilian girls and women in the nineteenth century. Along with it, we get a backstage view of the rise and fall of Brazil's monarchical system. (Dain Borges, University of Chicago) Barman, who led the way with a biography of Dom Pedro II, has produced another pioneering study of the period. (Times Literary Supplement) About the Author Roderick J. Barman has been a member of the history department at the University of British Columbia since 1921. He is the author of *Citizen Emperor: Pedro II and the Making of Brazil, 1825-1891* (1999), the winner of the 2001 Warren Dean Prize for the best book on Brazilian history.