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Native Peoples of the Gulf Coast of Mexico (review)

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Native Peoples of the Gulf Coast of Mexico. Edited by Alan R. Sandstrom and E. Hugo García Valencia. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2005. Pp. x, 335. Illustrations. Maps. Tables. Glossary. Notes. References. Index. \$50.00 cloth.

This edited volume serves up solid ethnographic data in a well-designed and well-produced format. The collected chapters consider indigenous groups along the Mexican Gulf Coast, including lowland and upland regions. Scholars from outside the United States contribute the majority of papers; editors Alan Sandstrom and E. Hugo García Valencia have ably overseen the English translation of these chapters and have exercised a judicious editorial hand. The chapters are organized to provide optimum context and information, while Sandstrom's Introduction explains the impetus for the volume and outlines the general charge to the contributors. This charge includes the summarizing of previous research; discussions of language, demography, and population distributions; addressing issues of subsistence, settlement, and social organization; and consideration of issues of acculturation. The result is a rich ethnographic database (supported by an up-to-date bibliography) and an important point of departure for future studies.

Chapters 2 through 5 provide necessary background information. Lorenzo Ochoa Salas and Olaf Jaime Riverón (Chapter 2) admirably summarize three-thousand years of pre-Columbian activity across the Gulf lowlands. Chapter 3, authored by Alfredo Delgado Calderón, and Chapter 4, by Juan Manuel Pérez Zevallos, present ethnohistoric data from southern Veracruz and northern Veracruz, respectively. Co-editor García Valencia, in a puzzling effort entitled the "American Mediterranean" (Chapter 5), devotes much of the overly-brief discussion to the impact of Judaism on indigenous ritual and ideology. The next seven contributions address specific ethnographic groups, moving generally from the southeast to the northwest along the Gulf Coast. Denise Fay Brown (Chapter 6) offers a heart-felt overview of the Chontal Maya of Tabasco, underscoring the difficulties that ensue when foreign notions of land use and management are foisted upon indigenous peoples. The Popoluca of southern Veracruz are the subject of Chapter 7 (Félix Báez-Jorge and Félix Darío Báez Galván); of special note is the group's traditional penchant for polygyny, a practice now strongly dissuaded by Catholic influence.

In Chapter 8, María Teresa Rodríguez López and Pablo Valderrama Rouy discuss the Gulf Coast Nahuatl, a group distributed among four inter-ethnic regions from southern Veracruz to San Luis Potosí. This far-flung pattern translates into a variety of subsistence and settlement characteristics. Valderrama Rouy pulls double duty and also provides information on the Totonac (Chapter 9). Again, occupation within upland and lowland ecotones impacts the particular cultural expressions of distinct communities.

The Tepehua of Hidalgo, Puebla, and northern Veracruz are the topic of Chapter 10 (Carlos Guadalupe Heiras Rodríguez). The smallest ethnic groups discussed in the volume, the Tepehua, are one of the least acculturated indigenous groups along the

Gulf Coast. In Chapter 11 James W. Dow considers the Sierra Nāhñu (Otomí), “we of the nasalized language” (p. 231). Based on almost forty-years of research experience, Dow includes a direct assessment of how the Sierra Nāhñu would be served by the application and extension of anthropological knowledge. The volume’s final chapter provides a discussion of the Huastec Maya by Jesús Ruvalcaba Mercado. The Huastec (Teenek) are the most northern group of Maya speakers, occupying portions of northern Veracruz and San Luis Potosí. Despite this linguistic affiliation, the Huastec share more cultural traits with their Totonac neighbors than with their distant Maya relatives. The volume includes a short glossary for readers unfamiliar with terms commonly invoked throughout the papers. A hefty reference section specifies which entries are cited in which chapters. Finally, a healthy index surpasses the more perfunctory efforts that often characterize edited volumes.

The volume’s maps afford a rare editorial blemish. While almost every chapter includes a relevant map, these graphics seldom indicate the geographic relief that marks considerable portions of the Gulf Coast. Such relief may impede or facilitate cultural interaction; noting these geographic features would have helped readers contextualize the regional distribution of Gulf Coast groups. Of course, this minor disappointment in no way trumps the otherwise impressive nature of the volume. In his Introduction, Sandstrom observes that the Gulf Coast of Mexico is “one of the most dynamic regions in Middle America and perhaps the world” (p. 21). Such enthusiasm for the anthropology of this region is well warranted and the publication of these important ethnographic data is most welcomed.

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FAMILY/GENDER STUDIES

Entre la familia, la sociedad y el Estado; Niños y jóvenes en América Latina (siglos XIX-XX). Edited by Barbara Potthast and Sandra Carrera. Madrid: Iberoamericana, 2005. Pp. 403. Illustrations. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. \$36.00 paper.

The history of children has become fairly standard in European and American historiography but it is still quite rare in the literature on Latin America. This anthology, which examines children and youths, joins a small group of work including the anthology edited by Tobias Hecht, the monograph by Bianca Premo as well as a few articles that very often approach children via institutions or laws. Indeed perhaps the paucity of material on children has to do with the poverty of resources rather than the subject itself.

Therefore any additional work that brings together material on children’s history in Latin America is welcome even if it is a bit uneven—as is the case with this collection. The first group of chapters, which deal with the nineteenth century and the