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A Companion to Latin American History (review)

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("godfather") Santiago as a leader of a family of practitioners in Santiago de Cuba. A great part of the book's contribution lies in its revelation of the workings of the Congo-Bantú-based Palo Monte religion, with its practice of capturing and handling the spirits of the dead. Equally interesting are the references to Santiago's practices of Allan Kardec-inspired *espiritismo*, with its emphasis on the spiritual masses and communications with the dead. It also offers a fresh new look at the dance-and-music-filled worship of the *orishas* that is the syncretic religion of Regla de Ocha, commonly known as Santería.

What this book does deliver is a colorfully intimate portraiture of religious practice on the part of its authors, both of them acting as participant-observers, who, having visited the house of their teacher and guide on multiple occasions during five visits to Cuba, provide detailed descriptions of altar settings, sacrificial ceremonies, possessions, and the spirit-holding cauldrons called *ngangas* or *prendas*. Over 150 illustrations in this "photographic path of the Afro-Cuban spirit world" make a visually engrossing experience for the reader and a source of data for the researcher. And above all, it provides, from its emic perspective, a close look at the quotidian practice of Santiago, a true priest of these "crossed" religions and guide through their liturgies, rites, and arcane practices.

Yet for some readers for whom seeing is not necessarily believing, the texts and photos of Garoutte and Wambaugh's book may recall a passage in Manuel Cofiño's Afro-Cuban novel, *Cuando la sangre se parece al fuego* (*When Blood Looks like Fire* [1977]), which refers to its protagonist as a former true believer who realizes, after his conversion to the official ideology, that once "He lived in a world of gods. Surrounded by misery, blood and dreams. . . . In the change of one time for another. He lived in the world of saints, kings and warriors, gluttons and dancers, lechers and virgins, good and bad" (p. 21).

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EUGENIO MATIBAG

A Companion to Latin American History. Edited by Thomas H. Holloway. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008. Pp. x, 530. Bibliography. Index. \$200.00 cloth.

With 28 well-written and concise chapters, this volume is an accessible and welcome contribution to the general field of Latin American Studies. Under the editorial command of Thomas H. Holloway, chapters range in time from the late Pleistocene to contemporary period. Geographically, it addresses a fairly vast series of topics that concern the hemisphere as a whole while, at times, focusing on specific areas.

Three chapters by Tom D. Dillehay, John Monaghan, and Andrew R. Wyatt along with Jeffrey Quilter are all devoted strictly to pre-contact peoples and civilizations.

Approximately ten chapters then consider critical colonial history topics. William D. Phillips Jr. and Carla Rahn Phillips detail Portuguese and Spanish exploration while Patricia Seed discusses conquest and early colonization. Contributions by Kevin Terraciano on indigenous cultures in Spanish America and Franklin Knight on Africans and slavery in the New World provide readers updated perspectives on critical social issues. Susan Elizabeth Ramírez considers the Hapsberg Era from an institutional perspective with her examination of key administrative, religious and social policies. A cultural history of the colonial period is distilled by Rachel Sarah O'Toole. John Fisher and Jaime E. Rodríguez O. present us with quite readable accounts of late imperial and independence-era events. The colonial history of Brazil is handled by Hal Langfur while Judy Bieber's chapter on Imperial Brazil covers much of the nineteenth century.

The volume then continues with more of a thematic approach when entering into the national and contemporary eras. Nicely complementing Bieber is Aline Helg's comparative take on abolition and Afro-Latin Americans. Flowing from this are chapters by Aldo A. Lauria-Santiago on land, labor, production, and trade, as well as "modernization" and industry written by Colin M. Lewis. A handful of essays detail particular regional histories. Mary A. Renda opens discussion on the twentieth century in her essay on the Caribbean and the rise of U.S. Empire. Adrian A. Bantjes provides a concise review of the Mexican Revolution and its historiography. Joel Wolfe considers populism and developmentalism in Latin America by focusing on Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, and Chile. Luis Martínez-Fernández takes us into the era of the Cuban Revolution with his extended look at the island. David R. Mares then describes U.S. policies in the hemisphere in a chapter on the national security state, followed by Julie A. Charlip's well-informed piece on the Central American crisis.

The remaining chapters take on various key thematic and historiographic concerns. Robert McKee Irwin sketches the cultural history of Latin America since 1900 with mention of literature, avant-garde movements, music, film, as well as more contemporary manifestations. Nana Milanich contributes a very capable chapter on women, gender, and the family while Peter Wade gives us a condensed discussion of the many changing and complicated identity issues as related to ethnicity and "race" (rightly kept in quotations). Duncan Green rounds out the companion with reflections on neoliberalism and its implications for and its impact on Latin American societies from approximately 1980 to the present.

Overall, the volume is excellent with just the right mix of generalization and particularity. Several authors zero in on specific examples to illustrate their argument. Compared to your average textbook, the companion does not have much in the way of maps, photos, or images (there are a few). Yet Holloway and his team well make up for this with excellent state of the art bibliographies accompanying each chapter. Clearly fashioned as a reference work, this volume is smartly structured, well informed, and written by top scholars in the field. The only problem is the price; at

\$200 the “companion” will most likely find its home among other expensive library tomes rather than in graduate student backpacks and regular faculty briefcases.

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Arab/American: Landscape, Culture, and Cuisine in Two Great Deserts. By Gary Paul Nabhan. Tucson: The University of Arizona Press, 2008. Pp. x, 141. Photographs. Maps. References. Source Credits. \$17.95 paper.

Gary Nabhan covers an impressive range of topics in his latest work. Among a community of Arab American writers and scholars, Nabhan seeks to understand his ancestry by drawing on personal experiences both in nature and in informal ethnographic settings. Trained as a desert ecologist and agricultural scientist, Nabhan shares with readers his exploration of “whether desert creatures and desert cultures are inherently competitive for scarce resources in ways that inevitably lead to war” (p. 4). In nine chapters, Nabhan describes the camel importation in the nineteenth century to the United States; desert culinary similarities between Arabia and al-Andalus and Mexico and the U.S. Southwest; Arabic language influences; plant-identification in Siwa, Oman; warnings about human-modified landscapes; and his family history in the Arabian Peninsula and the Levant. The final chapters trace the different tastes of the spice thyme, use hummingbirds as a case study, and take on the environmental implications of war. Each chapter poses provocative questions and challenges readers to more closely look at global linkages (what the author calls, “congruencies” [p. 4]).

Nabhan succeeds in making history more accessible to general audiences and integrates his interests in sustainability and culture by drawing on his own family’s migration story. For historians, however, the book does not always provide precise citations on source material. In Chapter 1, for example, Nabhan tells the engaging story of camel-driver “Hadji Ali (Hi Jolly)” that leaves readers wanting to know more of the historical evidence. Ultimately, Nabhan concludes that many people from desert landscapes have faced environmental injustice by dominant societies failing to recognize “every person’s and every peoples’ right to peace and connection to place” (p. 130). He therefore asks his audience to embrace the similarities of desert cultures and landscapes and to care for both by “water[ing] your garden always” (p. 133).

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