

constitution of independent nations, mainly Haiti, Cuba, and the Dominican Republic, US imperialism in the region, the Cuban Revolution, and the social transformations at the end of the twentieth century.

However, with a gap concerning the independence processes of British and French colonies (except for Haiti), this narrative fails to debate the forms that nationalism and independence projects took in those countries. Despite this, by the end of the book the reader can understand in depth the argument that the histories of the Caribbean are rooted in a tradition of struggle for freedom, and how this is constantly represented by access to land. Freedom and land, consequently, share meanings around very important issues in Caribbean life, such as autonomy, family, community, and religion.

Dubois and Turits demonstrate that alternative paths and different futures were constantly tested and designed by Caribbean societies and they were “rounded in the experiences, practices, and hopes that have been created and sustained by Caribbean populations over centuries” (319). And those same experiences, practices, and hopes have been “misunderst[ood], overlook[ed], or silence[d]” (319) in histories across the region for a long time, as they are opposed to the hegemonic visions of land and freedom.

Dubois and Turits put before the reader a past of struggles for freedom and autonomy in the Caribbean—even though much of it has been violently crushed by colonial and imperial powers—and in doing so they inspire all the Americas to look at their indigenous and African roots and develop new and different projects for the future.

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MEXICO'S INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLES

The Journal of James A. Brush: The Expedition and Military Operations of General Don Francisco Xavier Mina in Mexico, 1816–1817. Edited by Karen Racine and Graham Lloyd. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2020, Pp. 265. \$85.00 cloth; \$85.00 e-book.
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Its indifferent title does little justice to this excellent volume so ably introduced and contextualized by Karen Racine and Graham Lloyd and so illuminating of Mexico's decade-long independence struggles. James A. Brush was a Scottish soldier who cut his teeth in Spain in the aftermath of Napoleon's 1808 invasion of the Iberian Peninsula, seeing action in several battles over the course of five years. Observant, well acquainted with the Spanish world of the early nineteenth century, presumably fluent in Spanish,

and eager to pursue the fight against French and Spanish imperialism, Brush joined forces with Francisco Xavier Mina, a wealthy revolutionist from Navarre who had similarly resisted the French invasion and was now bent on opposing tyranny in the New World. The editors sketch Mina's dazzling story well, cobble together what is known about Brush's background, and chart the convergence of a soldier from Glasgow and a firebrand from northern Spain who, along with many others, boarded a ship in Liverpool one auspicious day in May 1816 with the intention of emancipating Mexico.

The first clue that this would be more than a run-of-the-mill journal is that Brush begins with an informative section about Mexico's geography, history, and racial and ethnic divisions, as well as a meaty discussion of the country's revolutionary movements up to 1816. Here we learn not only about the Miguel Hidalgo and José María Morelos but also about lesser figures like Albino García, whose usual mode of marching was "in a carriage full of women, himself seated in the midst of them with a bottle of brandy, of which he made liberal use," and trailed by his guitar-playing officers (39).

The middle section is probably the least insightful, as the motley group of foreigners moves from the parched Gulf of Mexico coast toward the Bajío, a wealthy region in central Mexico dotted by silver mines that had been the cradle of the early independence movements. Once the expedition reaches the Bajío, Brush's journal comes alive again. General Mina's adventure took place during a very low moment for the Mexican rebels, when the royalist government was on the ascendency and the insurgencies of Hidalgo and Morelos seemed like a distant memory. Brush describes some of the last bastions of resistance in the region. One was Jaujilla, a large fortress on an island in the middle of a lake near Zacapu, Michoacán, built with sundried bricks. As the fortress occupied the entirety of the island, "with the water reaching to the foot of the walls," it could only be entered in canoes (125). Jaujilla was advantageous militarily, but those who held it suffered greatly as the vapors that raised from the lake rendered it very unhealthy, according to Brush. Their tenacity is evident.

Another site of this geography of resistance was the Valle de Santiago, a municipality and town midway between the two principal cities in the region, Morelia (then called Valladolid) and Guanajuato. After the fighting between 1810 and 1817, both cities experienced considerable population losses. In stark contrast, Valle de Santiago grew tremendously, becoming the largest town in the region with a majority of residents committed to the cause of independence, according to Brush. Yet, like other places in the Bajío, the Valle de Santiago had been devastated so that its former beauty "could only be inferred from the churches and fragments of broken architectural ornaments" and the residents occupied temporary buildings raised "amongst the ruins" (127).

Insights like these make Brush's journal extremely valuable for anyone interested in gaining a deeper understanding of life in Mexico's during the wars of independence.

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ENLIGHTENMENT SCIENCE AND NATURE

The Science of Useful Nature in Central America: Landscapes, Networks and Practical Enlightenment, 1784–1838. By Sophie Brockmann. Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. xiv, 267. Figures. Acknowledgments. Notes on translations and names. List of abbreviations and acronyms. Glossary. Bibliography. Index. \$99.99 cloth. doi:10.1017/tam.2021.120

For late eighteenth-century Central Americans, knowledge was good only insofar as it was useful and useful only insofar as it was true for their specific context. Focused primarily on the Real Sociedad Económica de Amantes de la Patria de Guatemala (the Economic Society) and its mouthpiece, the *Gaceta de Guatemala*, Sophie Brockmann's insightful and engaging new work delves into the meanings and manifestations of the Audiencia of Guatemala's practical Enlightenment. Throughout, Brockmann elucidates late colonial Central Americans' dedication to making their landscape prosperous through the development, circulation, and application of locally situated knowledge. Taking up the language of her subjects, she argues that a specifically Guatemalan patriotic space and localist epistemology emerged through the recognition of the region's own peripherality and a determined effort to overcome that peripherality through knowledge in action.

Brockmann's work contributes a much-needed Central American perspective to a robust scholarship that situates the Enlightenment well beyond elite European spaces. Guatemala was a region whose men of letters readily acknowledged that their *patria* as it stood was no jewel in the Spanish crown. By examining the ways in which Central American actors sought to claim a place in the imperial jewel box, Brockmann highlights her actors' awareness of the rhetorical tools and practical undertakings that marked the Spanish American Enlightenment. She makes clear that historians' debates over the relationships between metropolitan and peripheral, and between universal and specific knowledge, were well understood by those we study. With the aim of practicable knowledge, Central Americans judged that straightforward texts based on place-based understandings aimed at useful outputs were generally superior to learned discourse. What good was Linnean taxonomy if it did not help a local official find the potentially lifesaving plant he sought? While there could be more discussion of how Central American actors positioned themselves vis-à-vis their other Spanish American counterparts, Brockmann illuminates a determinedly localistic and aspirational Enlightenment that expands our definition of the term.