

CENTRAL AMERICA

The Legacy of the Filibuster War: National Identity and Collective Memory in Central America. By Marco Cabrera Geserick. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2019. Pp. xxv, 149. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. \$90.00 cloth; \$85.50 e-book.
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Over the last two decades, historians have reassessed Benedict Anderson's arguments about nationalism in Latin America. Although Marco Cabrera Geserick limits his engagement with Anderson, he adds his voice to those of historians who have countered Anderson by arguing that most Latin American nations developed nationalistic impulses after independence rather than before. He draws on Hobsbawm's theory that states needed to invent traditions to sustain political projects. In Costa Rica, those traditions centered on the Filibuster War. But Cabrera complicates Hobsbawm's emphasis on state-endorsed traditions by arguing that "popular subordinate classes" contested the state for control over the memory of the Filibuster War and the traditions that surrounded it (94). In Costa Rica, "non-elite groups were able to challenge the elites and redesign the meaning of the Filibuster War, . . . changing the sense of national identity and the core values of the nation" (ix).

Cabrera uses Costa Rica as a case study to test prevailing theories about nationalism because that nation took an unusually bloodless and uneven path to independence from Spain in the 1820s. The nation won its first military victory for sovereignty in the 1850s, when forces of allied Central American nations defeated US filibusters led by William Walker. The war produced multiple heroes and national dates of remembrance that Costa Ricans disputed and co-opted over a century and a half.

Initially, for example, president Juan Rafael Mora promoted celebrations of May 1, the date in 1857 when the filibusterers surrendered. As power changed hands, however, Mora's political enemies sought to erase the war from collective memory so as to dissociate state celebrations from a war in which many considered Mora a hero. As the decades advanced, new regimes chose to commemorate other significant dates of the war that they believed promoted their own legitimacy. Despite the attempts of state authorities to impose traditions and commemorations to reinforce their legitimacy, non-elites carried local traditions about the war into the twentieth century, especially those related to the memory of the war hero Juan Santamaría. During the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century, they mixed the memory of Santamaría with popular culture, resisting government-sponsored attempts to control the narrative of Santamaría and the Filibuster War.

Cabrera's work deserves close attention from scholars of Latin American history and the history of nationalism. It engages closely and intelligently with a variety of theories to complicate the advance of Latin American nationalism. At times, however, he leaves the

reader wishing for additional explanation. For example, he examines an attempt in the 1950s by José Figueres Ferrer to replace April 11—a date associated with Santamaría—with March 20 as a national holiday that closely connected Figueres's regime with an important battle of the war. Cabrera argues that Figueres's failure indicated the inability of the government to impose a state-invented tradition in the face of popular resistance. He could have more clearly explained how Figueres's attempt differed from attempts by Tomás Guardia or the Alajuelato governments of the nineteenth century to connect their authority successfully to the Filibuster War. He briefly suggests that a more developed democracy allowed the media to protest more freely the actions of Figueres, but he leaves the reader wishing that he had spent more time on that analysis, perhaps engaging more with Anderson's arguments about print capitalism.

Cabrera concludes with a fruitful examination of future avenues of study for the memory of the Filibuster War in Central America. Periodically, he rests his assertions on insufficient evidence. Even so, the book invites scholars to imagine how the war can serve to examine national creations in Central America. Its intriguing argument and theoretical framework make it a helpful addition to studies of Latin American nationalism and collective memory.

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CATHOLIC CHURCH IN COSTA RICA

Guatemala's Catholic Revolution: A History of Religious and Social Reform, 1920–1968. By Bonar L. Hernández Sandoval. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2018. Pp. 254. \$50.00 cloth.
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Bonar Hernández Sandoval's pathbreaking examination of the Guatemalan Catholic Church's development over nearly five decades promises to excite academics in many fields beyond religious studies. In particular, this work should be of great interest to scholars interested in Cold War-era rural developmentalism and/or indigenous resistance and adaptation to sociocultural pressures. Hernández has produced a concise and well-researched book that employs Church records produced by foreign missionaries in the Guatemalan countryside, as well as those produced by Vatican and Guatemala City Church officials, to trace the interplay between national, regional, and global forces and events that shaped the position of the Catholic Church within Guatemalan society during the middle decades of the twentieth century.

Hernández takes a chronological approach, with the book's first two chapters explaining how in the 1920s Vatican and Guatemalan Church leaders largely avoided national politics, which served to strengthen Church-state relations in the interwar years.