

## Reviews

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Thomas H. Holloway (ed.), *A Companion to Latin American History* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), pp. x + 530, \$199.95; £95.00, hb.

Thomas Holloway has put together a very readable and useful collection of articles that cover much of the history of Latin America from the pre-conquest period to the present day. The topics of the twenty-eight chapters, as Holloway notes, have been chosen somewhat idiosyncratically, largely in accordance with his undergraduate survey course. This, of course, is not uncommon for collections of this sort; the multi-volume *Cambridge History of Latin America* (CHLA) reflected to a great extent the course that Leslie Bethell once taught at University College London. Holloway's work in many respects is a one-volume, up-dating of the *CHLA*. Its chapters cover the usual topics, beginning with the pre-conquest era in America and the Iberian Peninsula, and then proceeding through the colonial and national periods, with specific chapters on Brazil as well as the Mexican and Cuban revolutions, and thematic chapters on indigenous peoples, slavery and abolition, religion, US relations and populism. Four chapters recognise topics that have become a part of courses in recent years: culture, the environment, gender, and ethnic movements. And the book concludes with a fine examination of the impact of neoliberalism.

The contributors, who include both well-known and not-so-well known experts in their fields, have approached their assigned task in various ways. A length limitation seems to have been imposed, for the articles are brief; none is longer than twenty-three pages including bibliography. Nevertheless, in most cases they manage to incorporate a wealth of relevant detail, complex issues and interesting analyses. Some chapters tend to follow a specific analytical line; Jaime Rodríguez's focus on the political and constitutional aspects of the independence period is a case in point. Others tend to be surveys but with analytical underpinnings and an impressive coverage of essential elements. Hal Langfur's examination of colonial Brazil stands out in this regard. A number of writers discuss recent additions to the literature and how this has affected our understanding of familiar developments. A few, including Susan Ramírez discussing Hapsburg institutions, and Aldo Lauría-Santiago surveying nineteenth-century socio-economic developments, illustrate their broad surveys with specific case studies, while others, like Sarah Chambers, address the length limitation by directing readers to their bibliographical entries to provide further 'nuance' to their offerings. Those bibliographies are rarely exhaustive but provide a good starting point for further research.

Instructors will certainly find material in most of the chapters to amend existing lectures and to construct new ones. Indeed, some of the authors seem to have presented their chapters with an eye to the classroom. One can almost hear Colin Lewis delivering his clear explanation of late-nineteenth-century modernisation and industrialisation. There is some overlap of material, but it appears in a positive way. For example, late twentieth-century authoritarian governments are discussed in terms of their impact on social and cultural developments, as well as being examined

on their own terms in chapters on the 'national security state' and late twentieth-century Central America. Another thread that reappears in different chapters on the nineteenth century is the issue of liberalism and the creation of viable, unified nation-states, while the chapters dealing with the modern era recognise the increasing importance of the United States in the various aspects of national development.

With so broad a coverage, the book is bound to attract some criticisms about points of detail, analyses or missing subjects. A few factual errors seem to have slipped the authors and editor. The Asturian, José Tomás Boves, was not black – even if his enemies were convinced his soul was the colour of pitch – while Chinese coolies on Peruvian estates tended to be the target of attack during the War of the Pacific, not the attackers. Beyond the picayune, one chapter that might attract somewhat greater comment is Luis Martínez-Fernández's study of the Cuban revolution. It presents an almost entirely negative picture of the post-1958 developments on the island. He may be correct, but since one of the themes that runs through many of the surrounding chapters is the willingness of the peoples of Latin America to resist oppression in its various and sundry forms, this reader was left wondering why, in the circumstances, the Cuban people did not react more aggressively. Furthermore, if the Cuban situation has been as bleak and negative as Martínez-Fernández presents, why is it now necessary to spend time on this fifty-year-old and apparently moribund revolution? Indeed, many of the chapters might have benefitted with a short explanation about why the information presented is important for an understanding of the broader issues of Latin American history.

One final issue is the intended audience of this book. While its coverage makes it a possible text in itself, it is probably more useful as a 'companion', as it describes itself. The problem is that the eye-catching price will put the book out of the range of most, if not all, undergraduate students. North American graduate students preparing for comprehensive examinations will find the book invaluable for its interpretations, details and bibliographies, but they, too, are likely to hesitate at purchasing it. As a result, it most likely will find itself restricted to the shelves of a handful of Latin American specialists and the stacks of university libraries where it may, but probably will not, receive the attention that it certainly deserves.

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Denise Y. Arnold and Christine A. Hastorf, *Heads of State: Icons, Power, and Politics in the Ancient and Modern Andes* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press), pp. 296, \$65.00, \$34.95 pb; £35.00, £18.99 pb.

Heads are ubiquitous in Andean archaeology. On textiles, for example, vines grow out of the open mouths of disembodied heads, and caches of crania are sometime found buried at archaeological sites. For the most part, archaeologists have offered explanations that fit each of these individual contexts – the heads on the textiles might be linked to concerns with fertility on the arid coast and the crania seen as evidence for aggressive expansion by a state. While these answers often offer some insights, they fail to provide a compelling explanation for why the use of heads and head imagery was widespread over thousands of years in the Andes. In this pioneering volume, Arnold and Hastorf attempt to answer this ambitious question.

The authors' rich understanding of the role of heads comes largely from the work of Denise Arnold among the Qaqachaka, an ayllu located in Bolivia. Combining her