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A Cuban Researcher's Dream Come True

Cuban Studies, Volume 27, edited by Jorge F. Perez-Lopez, is a Cuban researcher's dream come true. Not only does it contain insightful articles covering a broad spectrum of topics, it has an abundance of bibliographic information that should please many Cuban researchers.

Rene Perez-Lopez, in his "An Index to the First Twenty-Five Years of Cuban Studies," provides a comprehensive index of articles, topical bibliographies, bibliographic reviews and other contributions (excepting book reviews) for the first twenty-five years of *Cuban Studies* (it includes its predecessors, *Cuban Studies Newsletter* and *Cuban Studies/Estudios Cubanos*). The interdisciplinary character of the journal and its commitment to Cuban research is clearly reflected in the subject section of this index. Heavily represented are bibliographies and bibliographic essays. The index also highlights the journal's tendency towards disciplines such as economics, foreign relations, politics, and Cubans abroad with much less emphasis on disciplines such as art, anthropology, cultural issues, ecology, education, and women's issues. However, this is not a fault of the article's author who has done an excellent job in compiling this index.

Rene Perez-Lopez continues to provide even more material for the Cuban researcher in his thirty-seven-page compilation, "Recent Works in Cuban Studies." This compilation consists of more current works published in the *Cuban Studies* journal. Perez-Lopez, who teaches Latin American politics as an adjunct faculty member at Virginia Wesleyan College in Norfolk-Virginia Beach, Virginia, has greatly aided researchers of Cuban related

topics with his two extensive contributions to this issue of *Cuban Studies*.

Emilio Cueto, a native born Cuban who is currently an attorney for the Inter-American Development Bank in Washington, D.C., has made available his more than twenty five years experience collecting and studying Cuban cartography in his article, "Cuban Cartography, 1500-1898."

In his introductory remarks, Cueto notes that as extensive as his compilation of "Cuban" maps may appear, it is most definitely not an exhaustive compilation: manuscript maps, twentieth-century publications, maps where Cuba appears as part of a larger geographical area, highly specialized plans concerning topics such as geological structure, sanitary conditions, diagrams of fortresses, etc., have been excluded.

Cueto emphasizes the fact that while today many old maps are used as decoration, maps are primarily a practical tool. The maps during the period under discussion were used for day-to-day activities by navigators, sailors, sovereigns and rulers, and colonial administrators, to name just a few. Later in the article, he concludes that the primary use of published Cuban maps was for war and trade.

He notes that while maps are generally identified by only one name, the creation of a map was a joint effort between at least four individuals: 1) a surveyor-explorer-navigator, 2) a draftsman, 3) a printmaker, and 4) a publisher (p. 142). The name assigned to a given map might

belong to any one of these four; in most cases, there is no distinction made as to the contribution of the person whose name is assigned to a given map. In addition, due to the lack of copyright regulations at this time, mapmakers often “borrowed” parts of or complete maps from others without fear of censure or prosecution. Thus, it is often difficult to pinpoint just who did make a given map. In his conclusion, he notes that while in most cases, it is difficult to identify a map’s creator, with a few exceptions, map making was the domain of white males.

Cueto then goes on to give a chronological and geographical overview of the creation of Cuban maps. As a result of this overview, several facts become evident. First, while there were several important maps produced in Cuba during the nineteenth century, it was foreigners who dominated the creation of Cuban colonial maps. However, he does note that while it was a late starter in the production of Cuban maps, Spain was unrivaled in the production of Cuban maps in the nineteenth century in terms of scale, detail, accuracy, and the number of original surveys (p. 152)

In his “Checklist of “Cuban“ Maps, 1500-1898,” Cueto lists by author’s name more than 1,000 Cuban maps giving valuable information on each map including title, dimensions, author, medium of printing, source where it can be found, and place and date of publication (p. 160). This checklist is a must for any serious researcher of Cuban cartography.

As noted in the beginning of this review, this issue of *Cuban Studies* also contains several informative articles. In the article, “Has Cuba Turned the Corner? Macroeconomic Stabilization and Reform in Contemporary Cuba,” Manuel Pastor, Jr., chair of Latin American and Latino Studies at the University of California, Santa Cruz and Andrew Zimbalist, the Robert A. Woods Professor of Economics at Smith College, have teamed up to discuss the process of economic reform in Cuba during the 1990s. They note that the economic and social policies of Cuba’s leaders are not motivated by “socialist principles,” but rather by a desire to stay in power and to sustain a political base (p. 2). Thus, while it becomes obvious that external factors, such as the collapse of the Soviet-Eastern European trading system (COMECON) and ultimately the Soviet Union, necessitated the need for economic reform in Cuba, it becomes equally clear that those in power are sabotaging the reform process.

The authors note that key to the discussion of Cuba’s political economy is the fundamental question of who will be the prime investing agent in the Cuban economy.

Pastor and Zimbalist maintain that there are really three different economies in Cuba: 1) the traditional state sector; 2) the growing private and informal economy; and 3) the foreign enclave sector. While the foreign sector currently appears to be the most dynamic part of the official economy, it employs only five percent of the Cuban labor force (p. 11) and is unlikely to absorb the estimated 20 percent of the state labor force laid off as the state attempts to balance its budget. They suggest that the only way Cuba can remedy the economic situation it finds itself in is for the state to recognize the moribund nature of the state economy and adopt policies that expand the role of domestic producers (p. 12). However, they conclude that this is not likely to happen and with “minicycles of stop-and-go reform likely to persist, ‘next year in Havana’ will continue to mean future research trips or family visits and not the major breakthrough in the political and economic regime that so many have desired” (p. 15).

Jennifer Abbassi, an associate editor of *Latin American Perspectives* and a faculty member in the Department of Politics at Randolph Macon Women’s College in Lynchburg, Virginia, continues the theme of Cuban economics. Her article, “The Role of the 1990s Food Market in the Decentralization of Cuban Agriculture,” investigates the two times in Cuban history since the Cuban Revolution, 1980 and 1994, when the government has sanctioned private food markets. She examines the *mercados libres campesinos* (free peasant markets) of the 1980s. The objective of these markets was to deal with the frustrated expectations of the consumers who, because of more money to spend as a result of rising incomes and declining costs of living, were demanding more. Abbassi maintains that the free peasant markets did succeed in stimulating the flow of foodstuffs demonstrating the production potential of the private sector.

However, because they were unregulated and offered high-demand items, these peasant markets became more lucrative than the state cooperatives resulting in growing tensions between peasant farmers and those tied to the state-cooperatives. So strong was the cooperative members’ opposition to these peasant markets, in 1986, they were closed down overnight. Thus, individual farmers as well as cooperative members were once again required to sell all produce (except that grown for self-consumption) to the state (pp. 23-6).

Abbassi notes that in the mid-1980s, alternatives existed to replace the markets and that the state was still in a position to maintain subsidies of basic necessities and

enough food for its populace which allowed it to maintain its principle of egalitarianism and a state-conducted agricultural model. She maintains that this is not the case for the 1994 “mercado libre agropecuarios.” The Cuban state is no longer able to subsidize basic necessities. These free markets are now responsible for absorbing deeper economic and social tensions and off set food shortages, which was not the case in the 1980s (p. 35). It is accepted that today the Cuban economy needs what the markets can, at least partially, provide. Thus, according to Abbassi, the market option cannot be abandoned as it was in the 1980s (p. 36).

Hector Saez maintains that agricultural land in Cuba suffers from significant environmental degradation (p. 40). In his article, “Resource Degradation, Agricultural Policies and Conservation in Cuba,” Saez looks at various forces behind resource degradation in Cuban agriculture and uses this as a basis to present some policy implications. He focuses on soil degradation, but states that the analysis can be extended to other resource degradations such as water pollution, deforestation, etc. (p. 41) Saez examines Cuba’s agricultural policies by dividing them into three categories: “policies that affected property rights and the organization of production; policies that transformed the technology of production; and investments aimed at increasing infrastructure and rural services” (p. 49).

He points out that, while there are a multitude of reasons for Cuba’s resource degradation, blame can not be placed at any one door. However, he goes on to state that resource degradation has been accelerated primarily by state agriculture which is centered around large-scale state farms as opposed to that of the small farmers who have relatively little access to modern chemical and mechanical inputs (p. 56). Whereas family farms have tended to be polyculture-based systems which aid conservation of natural resources, the state has placed great emphasis on a monoculture-based agriculture for export. Saez notes that while the Cuban government has made significant investments in agriculture, these investments were “directed to implementing the large-scale, energy-intensive farming system that largely specialized in sugar-cane production and livestock” (p. 51).

In terms of rural development policies, Saez notes that policies were put in place that “aimed to create employment and improve education, housing, and health care in rural areas” (p. 55). Consequently, the success of these various rural policies have increased the rural living standards to such a degree that they have not had

to squander resources in order to maintain basic necessities (p. 56). He notes that the Cuban government has made large-scale efforts to reverse the island’s soil degradation trends with mixed results. For example, the government’s reforestation program, in place since the 1960s, in which small trees were planted en masse, failed to provide adequate follow-up care during the early stages of growth resulting in the program not being as effective as it might have been (p. 57). According to Saez, it is Cuba’s task is to find the appropriate combination of state, private and commercial mechanisms, as well as modern and alternative technologies that will foster sustainable agriculture (p. 44).

In conclusion, he gives several recommendations: First, he suggests that Cuba’s agricultural system be reconstructed into smaller farms; second, that the state improve the effectiveness of its environmental policies and be more aggressive in promoting alternative technologies; and third, that the government not abandon development policies that secure the livelihood of rural inhabitants. Finally, he suggests that there be a shift away from the monocrop-based, chemical intensive, government-controlled model of farming. Unless these suggestions are implemented, he feels that Cuba will not be able to achieve high agricultural production and ecological sustainability at the same time (p. 62).

“Public and Private Services and the Municipal Economy in Cuba,” by Stanley Malinowitz, discusses the “Organs of Popular Power” created in Cuba in the 1970s. When first created in the mid-1970s, they represented both political and economic decentralization that set up local governments that would be democratically elected by the populace and when in place would take charge of most consumer services (p. 68). According to Malinowitz, the municipal Popular Power system “held out the promise of greater democracy ... providing a means for popular participation and control over areas of the economy with which people have day-to-day contact and which most directly affect their lives ...” (p. 69). The Popular Power system, however, has not lived up to its great promise. Rather, consumer services are among the least efficient areas of the Cuban economy and the source of widespread dissatisfaction among the Cuban populace (p. 69).

According to Malinowitz, the theory that the municipalities were to self-manage the municipal’s consumer services ran into the reality of the highly centralized Cuban system which, in practice, left the municipalities little room to maneuver (p. 72). While the system

does provide an effective means of transmitting the complaints and demands of the populace, it does not allow for the means to solve these problems. In addition, those attracted to municipal positions tend not to be the island's most competent personnel, with the least skilled and least educated Cubans finding work in these areas. There is also the problem of "brain-drain" whereby the most competent and motivated workers move on to positions where they are given greater material rewards and where they are better recognized (p. 75). Clearly, theory and practice do not meet in this case.

Malinowitz goes on to discuss the "Informal Sector" in the Cuban economy (i.e., the black market, unregistered production and services, underground financial, currency and labor transactions). He notes that there is a special relationship between the consumer service sector and the informal sector in that their activities often mirror each other's activities. Given the low material rewards and prestige associated with consumer services, it is not surprising that workers tend to take advantage of their access to state goods and services for their own benefit outside of the state system (p. 79). He notes that, "a number of new laws and policies have been recently introduced that allow substantial expansion of the legal limits of private property and markets" (p. 80). For example, a new law, passed in 1993, expanded the number of legal private activities. However, he maintains that people are slow to enter into legal self-employment and while many have done so, many have opted to remain in the unregistered informal sector.

Malinowitz discusses the implications for Cuba's future. He maintains that the future of the island's economic and political systems is not clear. Nor, he claims, is it clear how far leaders have planned future strategies. To what extent will the municipal governments be strengthened as service providers? While it remains clear that a change in the municipal governments could benefit the regime's survival and reform strategies, it is not clear that there exists the political will to provide the municipalities the responsibility needed to accomplish this.

While the articles discussed so far have dealt with economic and agricultural topics, the last two articles to be discussed deal with completely different themes. The first, "Annexation and National Identity: Cuba's Mid-Nineteenth-Century Debate," by Graciella Cruz-Taura, focuses on the debate between two of Cuba's leading nineteenth-century intellectuals, Jose Antonio Saco and Gaspar Betancourt Cisneros over the possibility of Cuba's annexation to the United States.

The nineteenth-century annexation debate between Saco and Betancourt still has relevance today. Issues currently debated include the island's relationship to Spain and its Spanish heritage; its relationship to the United States; its racial differences; the sugar monoculture; and the development of a sense of national identity. In addition, the late 1840s debate suggests a complexity of issues that are often missing from the arguments that group all pro-annexationists into a single class of slaveholders desirous of preserving the sugar plantation economy and that present annexation as antithetical to the concept of a Cuban nation (p. 106).

Both Saco and Betancourt understood that Spain itself was reluctant to enter the modern world and were spurred to search for available national identity while at the same time bringing Cuba into the modern world. However, although both were critical of the colonial slave society Spain sought to maintain in Cuba and both had a modern vision for Cuba, they split on the issue of annexation as a means to realize their vision. Cruz-Taura, through the examination of "Ideas sobre la incorporacion de Cuba in los Estados Unidos" (Paris 1848) by Saco and an anonymous essay believed to have been penned by Betancourt, as well as other writings by Saco and Betancourt, successfully highlights the position of both.

Betancourt saw the United States as a means of modernizing Cuba and did not tie annexation to the concept of national identity. Saco, on the other hand, advocated accommodation within the Spanish Empire in order to preserve Cuba's Hispanic heritage feeling annexation and national identity were intrinsically linked. The author comes to the conclusion that, while Saco's argument against annexation is one of the best known and most cited works in Cuban history and has become a pillar of Cuban nationalist historiography for its stand against Anglo-American culture and its defense of the criollo concept of nationhood, Betancourt's argument, while viewed as heretical in the eyes of Cuban nationalist historians, accurately addressed the Cuban concerns of the mid-nineteenth century and, as such, remains fundamental to the concept of Cuban nationhood (p. 106).

The second article, "What's Black and White and Read All Over? Race, Gender, and Class in Cuban Literary Nation Building, 1902-1934," by Kenya C. Dworkin y Mendez, looks at the role of Cuban literary nation building in the context of 1902 (the formation of the Republic) through to 1943 (the end of the Machadato). She accomplishes this through an examination of the protagonists

of three novels, *Via Crucis* by Emilio Bacardi, *Juan Criollo* by Carlos Loveira, and *Ecue-Yamba-O* by Alejo Carpentier. She notes that during the period 1902-1934, the literature continued to express nineteenth-century concerns regarding the racial, ethnic, and economic shape the nation would take, despite the fact Cuba had, by then, established a constitutional and republican nationhood (p. 111). Analysis of the three novels, the protagonists, the ideas, and the events contained within them, shows how the three authors, all members of a white literary elite, although, according to Mendez, separated to some extent by their different family situations, upbringings, and political ideas, were able to capture the image of a people who did not fit the nationalist project because of race, ethnicity, or gender (pp. 111-12).

For example, she notes the three works examined highlight the fact that while the concept of a Cuban citizen in the nationalist project should be inclusive, in practice it was not; rather it was constructed through acts of exclusion. She goes on to show how each of the novel's major protagonists are portrayed in the novel as models of Cubanness (as a result of their patriotism, natural rhythm, etc.) they are rejected by the resulting nation-state because of their colonial dependency, corrupted colonial imitation, or blackness (p. 114). She sees each as a "literary representation of the political disappointments of the First Republic" (p. 131).

Mendez maintains that "one of the primary causes of the failure of the national project was an extreme, overzealous, biological racism ..." and that "all three ma-

ior protagonists are victims of the contradiction between the conceived nation-state and its reality, of a racist and sexist discourse that further marginalizes their already border subjectivities in a loosely defined, statelike entity (neo) colonial Cuba" (p. 115). The author concludes that these novels successfully foreshadowed the nation that was to be and overtly emphasized the intrinsic problems with the Cuban nation-building project (pp. 131-32). Through her examination of these three novels in terms of nation-building, Mendez has offered a powerful and insightful look at the issues of racism and national identity in Cuba in the twentieth century. This was a riveting article that kept one reading.

The last aspect of this issue of *Cuban Studies* to be discussed is the section devoted to book reviews. This issue contained several reviews which covered a wide variety of subjects including Afro-Cubans, history, politics, and economics. They were well written and consisted of contributions from several areas of the United States as well as abroad.

On the whole, this issue of *Cuban Studies* lived up to Rene Perez-Lopez's assertion that the journal provides a continuing focus on "keeping researchers abreast of the latest developments and the literature on matters related to Cuba" (p. 245).

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