



Nicola Foote, Michael Goebel. *Immigration and National Identities in Latin America.* Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 2014. 357 S. ISBN 978-1-322-24533-1.

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Historians of Latin America have needed a book like this for a long time, a necessarily-collaborative study that compares and contrasts the continent's immigration histories during a significant period in which Latin America's relationship with the world in economic, cultural and political terms was transformed.

Historians of migration have needed a book like this even more urgently, combining empirical detail with conceptual rigour to allow Latin American histories to enter debates on migration beyond oft-repeated references to the slave trade, Italians in Argentina or stand-alone studies of isolated, apparently unique European 'colonies'.

The near-oceanic scale of the distance in the historiography between histories of migration and histories of nationalism meant that, once Nicola Foote and Michael Goebel had identified it and crafted an effective way to bridge and fill it, they had a relatively open goal awaiting them. Even so, they have constructed a magnificent and illuminating book which I recommend to all historians of Latin America, regardless of their interest in either immigration or nationalism. I am also certain that reading this book will help historians of migration to incorporate the diversity of Latin American experience into their global analysis of the phenomenon. I take this opportunity to declare that I came to know the editors of this volume when I took my doctorate in Latin American history at University College London in the first

years of the twenty-first century. I continue to admire their work which clearly acknowledges a debt to their supervisor Nicola Miller, particular in the emphasis placed on the role of elites, and particularly intellectuals, in fomenting and shaping national identities and nationalisms. This volume moves the debates around the origins of nationalism in Latin America forwards in several large steps, incorporating the global movements of peoples, and the global interconnections of ideas, into an overarching interpretation that is at once tied closely to archive-based detail, and confident about making grand *longue-durée* assertions.

The volume is introduced by Michael Goebel's 'Reconceptualizing Diasporas and National Identities in Latin America and the Caribbean, 1850-1950', bringing migration and diaspora theory, most notably that of Rogers Brubaker, to bear on an overview of immigration to Latin America. Goebel argues that (p. 9) 'it was nationalism that made migrations visible' and suggests that many groups were only 'becoming national in the diaspora' (p. 15). Goebel suggests early on that 'such manifold and varying relationships between migrations and the (re)formulation of nationalisms in their global embedding must lead us to reconceptualise clean oppositions and dichotomies' (p. 19). The volume shows clearly why this needs to be done, and gives us a sense of methods that might help us to think about how to do it. The edi-

tors are certainly not able to propose new or revised conceptualizations, beyond stating the diversity of historical experience across the region, the blurring of categories and boundaries, and the importance of precision and comparison. This is not to understate the editors' major achievement, which is to move beyond a call for attention, to laying out the foundations and emphasising the urgency, for historians to integrate migration studies with Latin American history.

For the first time, an inclusive approach to immigration across Latin America in this period is adopted, and the results are startling. Lara Putnam's chapter provides an insightful reflection on migrants and nations across the Caribbean islands and rimlands (including Venezuela, Mexico and the United States), drawing on her deep immersion in the field. My principal criticism is that the focus on overviews and intellectuals encouraged by the editors means that the social history of immigration is relegated to the footnotes rather too often. Exceptions are Nicola Foote's own chapter on British West Indian migrants to Latin America, in which petitions and legal cases retrieved from an impressive range of archives allow the reader to perceive the transnational commonalities in the ways in which Black West Indians used their status as British subjects to try to resist – often without success – the violence and abuses to which they were often subjected as immigrants in Latin American societies whose laws and customs were designed to exclude black people from citizenship. Several of the chapters make passing reference to the clubs and associations that immigrants formed in order to protect their pre-migration cultures and identities, as well as to engage actively with host communities. I was left wanting to know more about the members and activities of the sports and recreation clubs formed by migrant groups which, seeing as at least two of the contributors, Ranaan Rein and Stefan Rinke, have written extensively on football history, seemed like a missed opportunity.

This quibble aside, *Immigration and National Identities in Latin America* is clearly a major breakthrough in all of the fields on which it draws; it will also be a useful teaching aid. I have already put several of the chapters from this book on my reading lists for next year. Jürgen Buchenau's chapter on Mexico, 'The Limits of the Cosmic Race', is the perfect historical complement for students encountering José Vasconcelos's work for the first time. Kathleen López's chapter on Chinese immigrants and Latin American nation-building is an excellent antidote to all the studies proclaiming a new era of Chinese interest in Latin America.

Immigration and National Identities in Latin America is far from the last word on the subject, of course, and subsequent scholars will interrogate its claims and assertions. It does not provide new conceptualizations of diaspora or migration that might be applied back to more-commonly studied regions such as Europe or the United States. The book provides the foundations for the overhaul of research on the subject in relation to Latin America from whatever perspective.

So what, if anything, do we learn from this mass of collaboratively-produced knowledge, these regional studies combined with entangled histories, the demonstration of malleable borders and diverse experiences? I think that we can take three main findings from a reading of this book.

Firstly, the volume reveals the missing elements in studies of race and *mestizaje* in Latin America, which have often hitherto complacently analysed miscegenation as the mixing of European, African and indigenous peoples. The absence of Chinese, Japanese and Arabic immigrants from today's historians' discussions of race in Latin America, is clearly shown to be the legacy of the intellectuals of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, who were adamant that such migrants should remain outside the nation.

Second, the volume presents compelling evidence to support the importance of timing in his-

torical processes. Time and again we see waves of migration responding to particular events or moments – Italians from the Veneto region moving to work in coffee in Sao Paulo state after the abolition of slavery in Brazil; British West Indians migrating to Panama to work in the Canal Zone, Chinese migrants to the Pacific guano fields, for example. Understanding the consequences of these immigrations requires contextualization of the meanings that these events had – both at the time, and since - for host societies. Michael Goebel's chapter comparing Italian Fascism and Diasporic Nationalisms in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay is especially effective in illustrating this point. The historical context of the moment of arrival was often as crucial in shaping processes of integration, assimilation and exclusion as were factors of race, class or gender.

Third, we are reminded to maintain an approach to Latin American history that privileges the global connections of all historical actors, not just diplomats, politicians or intellectuals. As Nicola Foote observes in her incisive concluding overview 'Writing Latin American Nations from Their Borders: Bringing Nationalism and Immigration Histories into Dialogue', (p. 281) 'the development of regional nation-states was inextricably entwined with global migratory currents'. Migration and immigration were (p. 292) 'mutually constitutive'. The next step in the process of historicizing and understanding these processes over time, is to address a point which is acknowledged at several points through the volume, especially in its first half focusing on migration against a regional context: internal migration within nations, and migration between neighbouring countries across weakly-regulated borders. The significance of inter-continental immigration into Latin America until 1950, and out of Latin America since then, must now be clearly acknowledged, thanks in large part to the editors and authors in this collection. We can now also see the extent to which Latin America has long been a continent on the move, in which displacement and rural-urban mi-

gration have, perhaps even as much as immigration from other continents, shaped the histories of peoples, states and nations.

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