

The epilogue takes readers through the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s and the persistence of normal school student activism into the 2000s. Padilla excels at highlighting on-the-ground voices and experiences while providing the reader at the same time with a detailed description of policy shifts at the national level. In addition, the book is graced with a series of images drawn from archival sources and teacher-produced public art.

Even as Padilla provides readers with a wealth of empirical information, she makes a number of important historiographical interventions. In the long-running debate over how to understand the Partido Revolucionario Institucional (PRI) and the state it controlled, Padilla concisely summarizes the ruling party's approach: "While the PRI's tried-and-true strategy of co-optation was by definition a less violent method of suppressing dissent, its success depended on the ever-looming threat of violence—the violence of the stick or the violence of poverty" (15). Padilla also pays close attention to the way education policy intersected with questions of indigeneity and gender, pointing to its key role in the assimilative project of *mestizaje*. Further, the author carefully balances the accomplishments and limitations of a radical minority of normal school activists who played a disproportionately prominent role in Mexican politics but did not always command the sympathy of their colleagues or the communities they served.

In this way, and in others, this book successfully demonstrates how contradictions are central to Mexican history and why they must be central to our own analytical approaches. Education planners and their policies tell us something, but the beauty of this book, and history more broadly, is in illustrating how the most humble among us become historical protagonists in unexpected ways.

*Arizona State University*  
*Tempe, Arizona*  
[asdillingham@asu.edu](mailto:asdillingham@asu.edu)

A. S. DILLINGHAM

## BOOK NOTES

*Hernán Cortés revisado: 500 años de la conquista española de México (1521–2021)*. Edited by Felix Hinz and Xavier López-Medellín. Madrid and Frankfurt: Iberoamericana and Vervuert, 2021. Pp. 336. Illustrations. Notes. Indices. \$37.00 cloth.  
 doi:10.1017/tam.2023.54

This collection of essays is one of several that mark the 500th anniversary of the Spanish invasion of Mexico led by Hernán Cortés. It focuses nominally on changing views over time of the leader of the expedition, who has been variously praised and vilified over the centuries. The authors are largely from Mexico and Europe and include some of the leading scholars on the Invasion and the period, such as Bernard Grunberg, María del Carmen Martínez, and Patrick Lesbre.

The book's two sections deal with a wide range of issues related to the Spanish invasion of 1519–21. The first section includes studies related to the times of Cortés and the invasion, and the second contains essays on the discourse of the invasion, including a view of the war from Native perspectives.

This collection is a balanced view of the Invasion and its participants. In addition to the chapter on Nahua views of the war, there are also studies of the role of women, as exemplified by Malintzin. There are also essays with far more focused present-day points of view, such as one that looks at the changing views of the Invasion in German works over the last 50 years. Hinz offers a chapter questioning whether Spain should apologize for the Invasion, triggered by President López Obrador's 2019 call.

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*The Río de la Plata from Colony to Nations: Commerce, Society, and Politics.* Edited by Fabrício Prado, Viviana L. Grieco, and Alex Borucki. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2021. Pp. xix, 342. Figures. Tables. Bibliography. Index. \$159.00 paper; \$119.00 e-book.  
doi:10.1017/tam.2023.55

This volume is not designed to be a comprehensive overview of Río de la Plata during the transition from empire to independence. Rather, the collection of 14 essays exemplifies the vibrancy and variety of contemporary scholarship in terms of focus and method. Most of the contributions cluster around several themes of significance during the century from the 1750s to the 1850s.

The essays on the relationship between commerce, cooperation, and conflict look beyond seaports and international rivalries to the complexities of local and regional negotiations and accommodations. Those on the Afro-descendant population range from the early experiences of the enslaved en route from Africa to the Río de la Plata to the search for liberation through military service. A third group of essays addresses political alliances and movements during the independence wars and their aftermath.

Other essays do not fit snugly into this chronological and thematic scope, but nonetheless enhance our understanding of the region's long transition from the South Atlantic limits of Iberian empire to independent nation-states. An introductory essay by the editors provides a useful overview, describing the state of the field and situating the volume's essays therein.

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