

time. It is in this issue, however, that World War I may have made the biggest difference. At least in large Latin American cities, the conflict fractured cosmopolitan merchant communities along national lines and ultimately signaled the demise of European influence in Latin America.

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México-India: similitudes y encuentros a través de la historia.

Edited by EVA ALEXANDRA UCHMANY. Mexico City: Fondo de Cultura Económica, 1998. Photographs. Illustrations. Map. Table. Figure. Notes. xii, 300 pp. Cloth.

Four years ago Octavio Paz, who served as Mexico's ambassador to India until he resigned in protest of the Tlatelolco massacre, published his autobiographical *Vistumbres de la India* (Barcelona, 1995). Now comes the collection *México-India*. This is a mainstream, scholarly book that mixes anthropological, historical, and cultural essays with others on diplomacy and economic-agricultural development. Anyone who picks it up expecting a discussion of diffusionist theories of prehispanic contacts between Asia and the Americas will be disappointed. The first three articles deal with the precontact period. Mercedes de la Garza discusses Maya and Nahua cosmologies and their concepts of space-time. R. Balasubramanian then does the same for Hinduism (with a nod to Jainism and Buddhism), tracing its evolution from an early Vedic Aryan emphasis on ritual, to the Upanishads and the quest for an understanding of the relationship of the individual to the eternal, to Hinduism's dialogues with the West through Ram Mohan Roy and Mahatma Gandhi. These essays are followed by Lotika Varadarajan's interesting description of navigational techniques indigenous to Indian and Pacific Ocean civilizations and his illustration of Indian-Arabian marine architecture, such as the stitching (rather than nailing) together of wooden boats.

The book's post-postcontact section begins with Uchmany's thumbnail history of colonial trade between Mexico and the Philippines, in which she emphasizes the role of New Christians and Jews in its organization (naturally enough, given her own work, *La vida entre el judaísmo y el cristianismo en la Nueva España, 1580-1606*; Mexico City, 1992). Uchmany describes these transpacific contacts by weaving together the stories of New Christian merchants whose efforts to evade the long arm of the Inquisition had significant economic consequences. Agustín Grajales Porras presents the less frequently examined cultural effects of that contact in his exploration of the legend of Catarina de San Juan. She was born an Indian noblewoman, Meera, and taken as a slave to China where she was baptized, sold into the Philippines trade, and then brought to Mexico. There her exemplary life earned her sainthood, while her mode of dress inspired the China Poblana, now the symbol of Mexican mestizo womanhood. I was disappointed, however, that Porras did not compare the effects of this legend and that of the Virgin of Guadalupe in shaping Mexico's mestizo national identity.

Of the essays on the national period, a few stand out. Kiran Saxena's account of the fascinating career of Manabendra Nath Roy, a radical Marxist-humanist journalist, adds another wrinkle to what Friedrich Katz calls "the secret war" in Mexico. Originally seeking arms, ammunition, and money for India's struggle against British rule, Roy became a German agent in the United States, Mexico, and the Far East during World War I. He was acquainted with members of the circle of Greenwich Village socialists and his friends included John Reed and Carleton Beals. When Mikhail Borodin, Bolshevik envoy to Latin America, lost the Czar's crown jewels that were to finance his operations, Roy provided him with funds. Under Borodin's influence, Roy became a Marxist-Leninist and helped create the Mexican Communist party.

Beatriz Valdés de Macías interestingly describes the influence of muralists Diego Rivera and David Siqueiros on the work of Satish Gujral, who came to study with these Mexican masters, as well as with Rufino Tamayo, as part of a cultural exchange soon after India's independence. He contributed to Rivera's mural in the Teatro de los Insurgentes and to Siqueiros's mural, *La universidad al pueblo*, on the rector's building of the Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Gujral has perpetuated Mexican influences in Indian art through his school of the arts in Lahore.

The last essay of note is Malabika Bhattacharya's discussion of the influence of Mahayana Buddhist philosophy on Paz's poetry, in particular in his book *Ladera este*. Bhattacharya notes that of all the surrealist poets who were inspired by Buddhist philosophy, Paz was the only one for whom "Asia was a palpable reality, thanks to his prolonged residence in India" (p. 266). Paz, Bhattacharya notes, interlaced Hindu and Aztec myths to identify Vishnu with Quetzalcóatl and Kail with Coatlicue, and drew upon Buddhism to "construct heterodox paradigms," as for example in the poem "Lectura de John Cage":

Silencio es música,
 música no es silencio.
 Nirvana es Samsara,
 Samsara no es Nirvana.

The rest of the articles are of relatively little interest and reflect this collection's origin as a project of the Mexican and Indian embassies. While its aims are laudable, the book is not well executed. Although it contains a number of worthwhile pieces, those articles having to do with diplomacy and development read as if they came out of government offices. Perhaps the biggest problem is that the pieces must stand or fall on their own because Uchmany does not provide a comparative framework in her introduction and, just as bad, there is no index. The book is also poorly bound—my copy is already coming apart. While there may be some market for this work, it will be limited. For those really interested in what Andre Gunder Frank might call ReOrienting Mexican history, I would recommend doing selected readings in Chinese and Asian history.

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