

Book Reviews

of the pairing of African identity and a dominant racist culture. And finally, Harding claims that Bahian Candomblé served as a sort of '*feitiço*' a means, in Harding's words, of 'constructing an oppositional self (personal and collective) out of the materials of subjection, the materials of oppression, the history of slavery' (p. 148). As such, Candomblé emerges as the most important of several modes of resistance that allow Afro-Brazilians to survive (literally and culturally) not only slavery, but also the racism and homogenising forces of Brazilian society in the post-abolition period.

These arguments will not lack critics. While Harding supports them with intelligently deployed vignettes from her research in police archives, as well as an impressive array of secondary materials and theoretical arguments, some may find her leaps from archival hint to historical narrative a bit too blithe, and question the degree to which her interpretations read late-twentieth century politics into nineteenth century Brazilian life. Others may wonder if the Pan-African unity so crucial to Harding's account outweighed the many forces that worked towards the fragmentation of Afro-Brazilian identity in the nineteenth century, and still others may doubt that practitioners of Candomblé were uniquely representative of Afro-Brazilian responses to slavery. And there may be, finally, those who question the political significance of an Afro-Brazilian identity rooted mainly in shared, historically-conditioned cultural practices, arguing that political quiescence may have been the price of cultural survival on these terms.

Part of this book's value, though, is in its ability to provoke such compelling questions, and if Harding does not entirely quell these potential criticisms, she certainly makes a fascinating argument. This book is a thoughtful and insightful contribution to our understanding of the historical relationship between Candomblé, cultural survival, and Afro-Brazilian identity formation, and provides engrossing reading for specialists and neophytes alike.

Brodwyn Fischer
Amherst College

Buffington, Robert M. (2000), *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico*, University of Nebraska Press (London and Lincoln). 320 pp. £30.00 hbk, £13.50 pbk.

Robert Buffington has written a splendid contribution to the study of Mexican nationalism and its connection with the history of scientific discourses. Although the contours of Mexican discourses of nationalism in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries are relatively well known – thanks to the work of historians such as David Brading, Alan Knight, Florencia Mallon and Mauricio Tenorio-Trillo among others – this is the first attempt to connect them to debates about crime and criminals and, in particular, to the development of scientific

Book Reviews

discourses (criminology and anthropology) about the lower and criminal classes. *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico* refines our understanding of the dialectic between inclusion and exclusion in the construction of modern Mexican nationalism, and sheds critical light on its connections with race, gender and citizenship.

Buffington demonstrates that the advent of scientific criminology in the late nineteenth century served to reinforce traditional elite perceptions about the lower, non-white classes – and especially the indigenous segment – as morally defective, when not biologically degenerate. Most Mexican criminologists adopted an eclectic attitude *vis-à-vis* the seemingly polarised debate between ‘biologists’ (who emphasised the organic causes of criminal behaviour) and ‘environmentalists’ (who gave priority to culture and the ‘social milieu’ in explaining crime) but, in doing so, tended to conflate the moral and racial features of the so-called criminal classes. As a result, Buffington argues, lawbreakers were depicted as ‘a morally and biologically distinct criminal class’, which offered a rationale for excluding specific segments of the Mexican population from the allegedly inclusive national project. In this, Buffington finds a great deal of continuity between liberal, positivist and post-revolutionary criminologists, all of whom constructed the ‘criminal classes’ as a particular breed of people unfit for membership in the Mexican nation.

The most far-reaching proposition of Mexican scientific criminologists – one in whose formulation the newly adopted and increasingly popular science of anthropology also critically contributed – was the racialisation of the criminal classes. In a truly illuminating chapter entitled ‘*Forjando Patria*’, Buffington demonstrates how the exclusion of Indians from the *mestizo* Mexican project was built upon the notion of the Indian race as organically and culturally inclined to crime and unlawful behaviour. As the author emphasises, ‘for criminologists and increasingly also for anthropologists, Indianness itself was a tragedy; it was also a crime’ (p. 162). Whenever Indians rejected assimilation or failed to engage in the kind of cultural ‘surrender’ that was expected/demanded from them, this was interpreted as being the result of their propensity to depart from the normative standards of the ‘national’ community, which in turn resulted from their inclination to ‘deviant’ behaviour – very much like drunkenness, theft and violence. As read or imagined members of the deviant classes, thus, Indians deserved punishment instead of rights, repression in lieu of inclusion. The criminalisation of race and the racialisation of crime became the foundations of this discursive attempt to build a Mexican ‘nation’ in which some ‘Mexicans’ would not find their place.

The cultural and political exclusion of Indians from elite projects of nation-building was certainly not a novelty of the period under study. There was already a long history of elite racist discourses and attitudes against Indians, as well as equally exclusionary state policies and legal prescriptions. But now they are being recycled and refashioned under the prestigious aura of objectivity and ‘science’, which guaranteed their proponents a powerful influence in shaping both public opinion and state policies. Buffington offers a perceptive deconstruction of the

Book Reviews

logic and narrative strategies that both criminologists and anthropologists used for presenting their 'conclusions.' Although based on research of 'little consistency and less scientific merit' (p. 39), 'the integration of scientific discourse (...) lent credence to elite fears about lower-class violence, to developmentalist concerns about lower-class laziness, to traditional anxiety about race mixture, [and] to Social Darwinist warnings about national degeneration' (p. 62). The ideological and political nature of the allegedly scientific (i.e. objective) and innovative criminological and anthropological agenda is brilliantly exposed by the author in the core chapters of the book. The conclusion is inescapable: 'Science merely confirmed a diagnosis reformers had known all along' (p. 78).

Ultimately, the book demonstrates, modern Mexican science – as represented by criminology and anthropology – offered both the foundation for a nation-building project based on the alleged superiority of the *mestizo* 'race,' and the basis for the construction of its inevitable 'other,' the criminal: 'The opposition of criminal and citizen thus became the fundamental dichotomy within modern Mexican society' (p. 4). The racialisation of such national project (the attempt to present the *mestizo* as the incarnation of the 'real' Mexico) had its counterpart in the racialisation of the excluded criminal: Indians were depicted as the quintessential lawbreakers. Criminologists offered a 'scientific' explanation for criminal behaviour; anthropologists (and their readers) used it to justify the exclusion of Indians from the *mestizo* national project.

Elegantly written and convincingly argued, *Criminal and Citizen in Modern Mexico* is a solid contribution to the increasingly robust 'new cultural history' of Mexico, as well as an important addition to the growing scholarship on the history of crime and criminological discourses in Latin America. As such, it will appeal to a wide range of scholars interested in the comparative history of legal, scientific and nationalist discourses.

Carlos Aguirre
University of Oregon

Ochoa, Enrique C. (2000), *Feeding Mexico: The Political Uses of Food since 1910*, Scholarly Resources (Wilmington, Delaware). xiii + 267 pp. US\$55.00 hbk.

In this sharply focused, well-researched study, Ochoa traces the development and the eventual demise of Mexico's 'State Food Agency.' [Though the official name of the agency responsible for implementing Mexican food policy changed periodically in response to presidential objectives and bureaucratic restructuring, Ochoa employs this generic term to avoid confusion.] Exploring the contours of state policy, Ochoa highlights the efforts of the state to guarantee basic food supplies (wheat, corn, beans, milk) at stable and affordable prices for the urban and rural poor and to provide guaranteed prices to the rural producers to encourage production and integrate producers into the domestic market. In doing