

Book:

MUDDIED WATERS: Race, Region and Local History in Colombia, 1846-1948. Nancy Appelbaum. Duke University Press, Durham and London, 2003, xvii + 297 p., paper \$21.95; cloth \$64.95.

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This book is based on dissertation research the author conducted during the 1990s into the local history of several towns in Western Colombia's coffee producing region. The choice of Riosucio District on the boundary between the departments of Caldas and Antioquia proved to be an especially appropriate setting in which to explore the links between the four general themes that figure prominently in this book: race, colonization, region, and community.

In the Introduction Appelbaum recounts how she had initially planned to study the conflicts that arose as a result of "white"-identified Antioqueño colonists settling in and displacing their racial "others" – the local mestizos, blacks and indigenous peoples from what was then (1840's – 1880's) Northern Cauca State. A very intriguing anomaly of Riosucio's local history – the story of its two plazas (one for Indians, the other for whites) – eventually convinced the author that contrary to many scholarly and popular accounts of the Antioqueño migration, the history of these events was impossible to understand without first considering the collaborative relationships and tensions that existed between the colonists, the colonized and the actions and goals pursued by various intermediaries including local land speculators, politicians and indigenous authorities. By reconceptualizing the Antioqueño migration "...as a multilateral process of region formation" (p.13), Appelbaum repudiates both the "white" and "black" versions of the colonization legends that tend to attribute agency almost exclusively to the settlers.

Muddled Waters is an empirically rich and theoretically provocative look at the historical processes by which race and place have become intertwined. The book traces the historical relationships that characterized the daily workings of the colonization process in Riosucio District from local archives found to be in various states of upkeep and decomposition. What emerges is a rich and nuanced analysis that fuses specific historic details from local and national colonization experiences and the privatization of communal indigenous landholdings. Appelbaum uses this narrative as a strategic place from which to consider a series of significant transformations that occurred throughout post-independence Latin America: for example "... the consolidation of strong regional identities, ... the conversion of indígenas into mestizos, ... the emergence of racialized discourses of modernization...", etc. (p.24) In so doing, the book makes an important contribution towards the broader goals of the series of which it is apart. The series *Latin America Otherwise: Languages, Empires, Nations*, edited by W. Mignolo, I. Silverblatt

and S. Salvidar-Hull "...aims to explore the emergence and consequences of concepts used to define "Latin America..." (v).

The book is divided into three parts. The first three chapters cover the tumultuous period of partisan regional and political struggles between Conservatives and Liberals during the 1840s to 1880s. Part two explores how Riosucio's inhabitants experienced incorporation into the "white republic" during the political era from 1886 to 1930 known in Colombia as the "Conservative hegemony". Part three breaks with the periodization of the former chapters in order to emphasize "...the interplay of collective memories and identities..." (p.25) that have characterized the often contradictory ways through which local communities have imagined and portrayed themselves during the twentieth century. The concluding chapter reflects on the meanings of history, geography and culture in Colombia, arguing that these debates "... reflect ongoing controversies over land, revenues, and governance." (p.216)

Appelbaum situates her "constructivist" approach to region and race – seen in this view as variable social constructs that both manifest and reinforce relations of power - within expanding ethnographic and historical literatures that emphasize "...the participation of "subalterns" in both resisting and creating nation-states" (p.15). Cultural anthropologists have begun to favor similar approaches that emphasize the conscious choices made by indigenous peoples engaged in a series of cultural and political transactions shaped by changes in the legal and policy frameworks and by the surrounding ideological climate of the times. These perspectives provide a better grasp of how even within a particular indigenous community, many different determinants (wealth, kinship and patronage networks, proximity to roads, personal preferences, etc.) can operate simultaneously to shape individual behaviour and collective choices.