

When this book was first published, in 1971, it cast an illuminating beam on social history. In the early 1980s, Spanish scholars from several disciplines began a serious exploration of women's history, especially through the *Jornadas de Investigación Interdisciplinaria sobre la mujer*, under the able leadership of María de los Angeles Durán. By 1992 a considerable number of monographs on women from the Middle Ages through the twentieth century have enriched the field of Spanish women's and family history. Other modes of research have pushed the boundaries of knowledge beyond that distilled from the opinion makers and literati upon whom Gaité based her study. Is this translation necessary or desirable at this point? The scarcity of works on Spanish women in English would indicate so. On the other hand, it must be underlined that there are now alternatives in Spanish that take the historian into professionally cultivated fields. Yet the subtle cleverness of Gaité's prose—she is a superb communicator—and her sensitive treatment of the subject give this study the feeling of a classic that will endure well the passing of time.

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*The Tropic of Baseball: Baseball in the Dominican Republic.* By ROB RUCK. Westport: Meckler Publishing, 1991. Maps. Photographs. Index. xx, 205 pp. Cloth. \$37.50.

The increasing success of Latin American baseball players in the North American big leagues has provoked baseball administrators, journalists, and finally scholars to consider the reasons for baseball's popularity in the circum-Caribbean, especially in the Dominican Republic. This nation has sent more than 125 representatives to the majors and in 1987 had 70 shortstops scattered through various levels of professional ball. Even the Japanese have begun to exploit Dominican talent.

Ruck's study is one of four books in English on Latin baseball to appear in the last three years and one of two to focus on the Dominican Republic. Most agree that baseball's introduction into the Dominican is owed mainly to Cubans, though the sport received additional impetus from the U.S. Marine occupation (1916–1924) and the family of Rafael Trujillo. Also crucial was the role of the sugar industry: plantation owners constructed baseball facilities for their employees, and the seasonal cycle of the business permitted long periods of recreation. Organized baseball's integration after 1946 opened more doors to dark-skinned Latins, and the Cuban Revolution cut off a rich talent flow, sending scouts to other regional hotbeds.

Ruck also emphasizes the spontaneity and joy that mark Dominican baseball, as well as the conflict inherent in using an imported cultural form, one associated with Yankee invaders, to achieve national identity and economic success. He points out that Dominican professional baseball is somewhat in decline due to the export

of star players, but correctly avoids blaming misplaced dreams of making it big in baseball for unemployment and a lack of interest among Dominican youth in certain types of work.

Perhaps Ruck's most exciting contribution is his discussion of the *Cocolos*, British West Indians who migrated to labor in the Dominican cane fields. Hard workers, they carried a sense of discipline and community, and a love for cricket. "Without these English-speaking, cricket-playing sojourners, Dominican baseball would never have become the best in the Caribbean" (p. 118); it was *Cocolos'* sons and grandsons who transferred their skills and ambitions to the diamond.

This book will cause scholars some problems. It includes no notes, no bibliography, practically no discussion of methodology or theory. Spanish accents are erratic, maps inadequate, the sources of many quotes unstated, the narrative disjointed, the time frame often unspecified. Given these limitations and the price, it is unclear who the intended audience is. Although informative, Ruck's work must be read with Alan Klein's *Sugarball: The American Game, the Dominican Dream* (1991) and other studies to gain a fuller sense of Dominican baseball.

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## Colonial Period

*Aztecs: An Interpretation.* By INGA CLENDINNEN. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991. Photographs. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xii, 398 pp. Cloth. \$29.95.

In an eloquent series of essays, Inga Clendinnen proposes to reveal the collective psyche—the characteristic sensibilities, emotions, and attitudes—of the Mexica Aztecs of early sixteenth-century Mexico. She derives her interpretation from information contained in the *Florentine Codex*, an Aztec encyclopedia compiled by a Franciscan, Bernardino de Sahagún. She relies on this single source, with its idealization of categories and Spanish authorship, because of her impression that it preserves the authentic native voice. The topical focus is the notorious human sacrificial rites. These rites touched on various aspects of daily life, which are the subjects of the different essays: the city, the victims, warriors, priests, merchants, wives, mothers, and the sacred.

Clendinnen has laboriously pieced together scattered bits of information to "construct plausible psychological hypotheses" (p. 88) that recreate the texture of native life, sometimes rejecting the validity of passages on the grounds of "psychological implausibility" (p. 100). The resulting picture is bleak. The Aztecs are presented as a powerless, insecure, despondent people who were the pawns of a capricious supreme god. In Clendinnen's reconstruction, their misery began with the trauma of weaning and was relieved only by the finality of death.

A major factor contributing to this psychological state of affairs was a histori-