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Source: *The Americas*, Vol. 54, No. 3 (Jan., 1998), pp. 463-464
Published by: Cambridge University Press
Stable URL: http://www.jstor.org/stable/1008429
Accessed: 15-03-2016 23:08 UTC

index is thin, making it difficult to track the many references to topics that readers will undoubtedly wish to pursue. Forster's translation of Dessalles's writings shows that there is still much to be learned about the French colonies' transition to freedom in the nineteenth century and serves as a call to researchers to further tackle this fascinating period and topic.

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Roots of Identity: Language and Literacy in Mexico. Linda King. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994. Pp. 193. Illustration. Notes. $37.50.)

Social tension and cultural conflict in Mexico have manifested themselves in patterns of language use and literacy since the Spanish conquest. Linda King offers contemporary policy makers a seasoned social anthropologist's perspective on these issues, particularly as they concern some six million indigenous people.

Roots of Identity contains three parts. In the first, "Literacy: Myth and Reality," King cautions against the myth of viewing writing as a "boundary marker between the 'primitive' and the 'civilized' " (p. 12) and argues against a "necessary causal connection between literacy and cognitive structure or between literacy and economic development" (p. 15). These arguments notwithstanding, she also recognizes the significance of indigenous peoples' pre-Columbian and colonial written traditions and a nascent modern revival movement.

In the second part, "Language, Literacy, and Education," the author's experience with Mexican literacy programs and field research gives her considerable credibility as she guides us carefully through the difficulties of classifying languages and dialects in the 58 linguistic groups, as well as in gathering accurate census information. In addition, King appears well qualified to critique policies propelling the two main thrusts of literacy training for indigenous peoples since the 1930s.

The third part, "The Discourse of the Illiterate," dispells any notion that the book offers nothing more than a non-Indian, non-Mexican author's perspectives. Here King brings forward Mexico's multi-ethnic indigenous voice. She solicited opinions on language use and literacy from people both literate and illiterate, monolingual and bilingual, those still in the indigenous world and those who have crossed over into the mestizos' world. She quotes them at length, categorizes their responses, and shows what all of them can tell us about ethnic identity, linguistic conflict, the uses of literacy, and the value of education. The respondents, touched by various government programs, re-

flect considerable appropriation of the dominant, official ideology that is pro-Spanish and favor literacy. Yet they also exhibit views that provide insight into centuries of successful linguistic resistance. King does not promote the maintenance of "museum cultures" (p. 122), but her conclusions raise legitimate concerns about developmentalist strategies and their impact.

Specialists in the precontact and colonial eras may find that the chapters containing background information lack a comprehensive treatment of the painting and writing that produced so many codices and thousands of pages in native languages. And how was the work of the literate minority embraced by the larger, agraphic community? What happened to that relationship after the record keepers came to work mainly in Spanish? These chapters may also draw fire in their coverage of what the author calls the "cultural apartheid" (p. 6) inherent in separate republics for Spaniards and indigenous peoples, and their inadequate survey of sixteenth-century ecclesiastics' policies regarding indigenous language use (glossing over the work of Bernardino de Sahagún, for example). Historians who use this book as a work of social anthropology may, however, appreciate what King has to say about rethinking the meaning we ascribe to the presence or absence of writing. We may also find food for thought in the underlying narrative of indigenous cultural survival that runs through this generally serious and capable piece of scholarship.

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Merengue: Dominican Music and Dominican Identity. By Paul Austerlitz. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1997. Pp. 195. Illustrations. Notes. Bibliography. Index. No Price.)

When I began reading Robert Farris Thompson's foreword to this volume, I immediately knew that I would enjoy reading and learning from it. He begins appropriately with: "Merengue dance music—soul, voice, mind, and motion of the Dominican Republic—takes shape, in time perspective, within these pages" (p. vii). What follows Thompson's foreword are Austerlitz' preface, introduction and eight chapters divided into two parts: (1) "The History of Merengue, 1854-1961" and "The Contemporary Era, 1961-1995." The volume is endowed with several intriguing black-and-white photos.

The text lives up to its title by exploring concretely and comprehensively Dominican identity through a careful study of *merengue* from historical, social, and psychological perspectives. Austerlitz aptly points out that the so-called "contemporary era" began in 1961, the year of the assassination of dictator Rafael Trujillo, who was despised and feared by many. His death inspired the launching of many anti-Trujilloist merengue lyrics such as "Ma-