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Rosemarijn Hoefte, Matthew L. Bishop & Peter Clegg (eds.)

Post-Colonial Trajectories in the Caribbean: The Three Guianas. London: Routledge, 2017. xix + 189 pp. (Cloth US\$149.95)

This volume covers Caribbean states and territories that cross historical colonial boundaries, and also focuses on a Caribbean subregion that is mostly “off the map” in Caribbean (or Latin-American) writings. (See J. Gimlett’s *Wild Coast: Travels on South America’s Untamed Edge* [2011] for an exception.) As such it provides a valuable contribution to our knowledge of the individual Guianas, relations among them, and the region as a whole.

The nine chapters cover social, political, and economic issues relevant to the postcolonial trajectories of the Guianas. The first three introduce modern history in Guyana, Suriname, and French Guiana respectively. In describing Guyana’s modern history, Kate Quinn focuses on the role of various social movements and changing political systems. Hans Ramsøedh highlights the nature of democracy and political culture in Suriname and reflects on how a hybrid political system operates in the country. An essay on French Guiana by Fred Réno and Bernard Phipps deconstructs the dichotomy between universalization and particularization and explores this in relation to political claim-making by different ethnic groups.

The remaining chapters are thematically organized, and each addresses all three Guianas in terms of economic, political, cultural, and social dimensions. Three focus more on social-cultural themes (ethnicity, migration, and Chinese presence) and three are oriented toward political-economic issues (gold-mining, infrastructure, and energy). Steve Garner takes a comparative approach to understanding the relationship between politics and ethnicity in the Guianas, emphasizing the social construction of ethnicity and the way its local form emerges from historical and political contextual factors. Simona Vezzoli presents postcolonial immigration and emigration processes in the Guianas and explains differences in patterns from major political and economic developments including independence and border regimes. Paul Tjon Sie Fat, Ranu Abhelakh, and Edward Troon discuss the Chinese State and ethnic Chinese in the region, present diverse and distinct migration patterns within the region, and review the way the influence of the Chinese State takes shape in each of the Guianas. Marjo de Theije’s chapter, on small-scale gold mining, addresses connections between “gold, politics and mobility.” Due to the transnational character of the sector, divergent policies on small-scale gold mining in the region create complex formal and informal transborder processes that determine local forms, function, and relevance of the sector.

One of the challenges of the Guianas is their relative isolation, resulting from lack of physical access to the rest of South America and limited connections between the three territories. Pitou van Dijck's essay analyzes the potential of cross-regional road programs to increase regional integration and strengthen the region's position in international economic markets. Anthony Bryan contributes an essay on fossil and renewable energy in the region which considers various complications in maximizing the potential of these types of energy and explores possibilities for integration of energy systems across the Guianas and beyond, in the wider Caribbean or South America.

The editors' introductory and concluding sections consider a relational approach to understanding the contemporary Guianas. Woven through various chapters are (often tenuous) relationships within individual Guianas (for example between the coast and the interior), and between the three Guianas and the wider Caribbean, Latin America, and even Europe and China. This relational approach successfully connects the wide range of issues addressed in the book. It also enables the editors to take a look at the future of the Guianas in the book's conclusion.

In their efforts to "analyze the Guianas in a truly integrative way" (p. 1) and to provide "a systematic consideration of the political, economic and social challenges facing the Three Guianas" (p. 6), the editors do not take a comparative approach. Without questioning the richness of the book and the quality of its individual chapters, I believe that such a comparative analysis would have had added value. By analyzing one country's experience in the light of another, one can distinguish what is case-specific from what holds across diverse cases, and generate more abstract theoretical insights about the Guianas or even the Caribbean (see, for example, *The Urban Caribbean*, edited in 1997 by Alejandro Portes et al.). The Guianas, combining large diversity with substantial commonalities, provide an excellent opportunity for comparative analysis; this becomes clear from the outstanding chapters by Garner and Vezzoli, which do take such an approach, offering a model for future research on the three Guianas.

In this book, Rosemarijn Hoefte, Matthew Bishop, and Peter Clegg present an ambitious and comprehensive research agenda and provide an excellent basis to start the execution of such an agenda, building on and expanding our knowledge of the postcolonial Guianas.

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