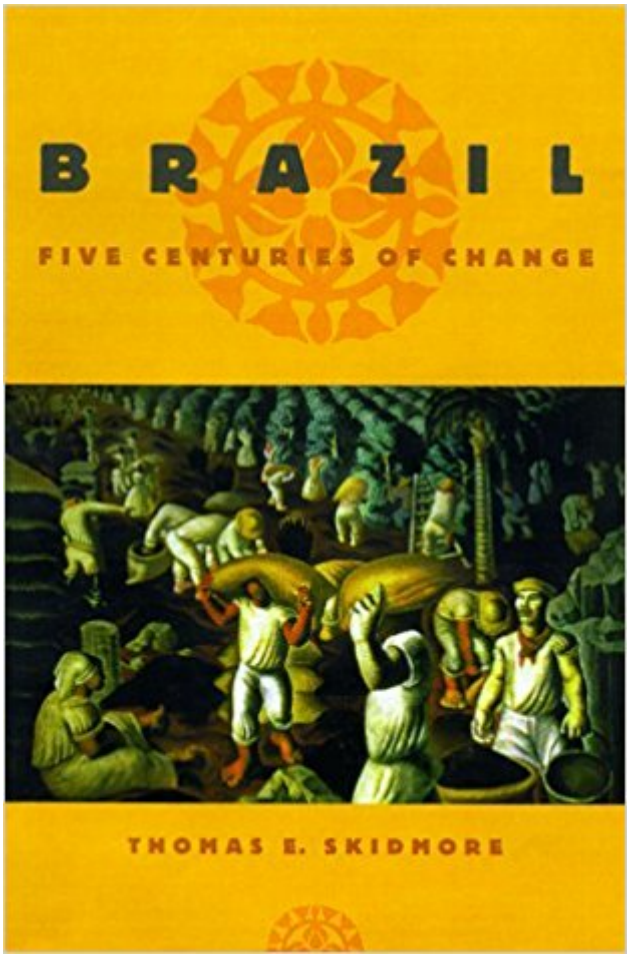
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Brazil: Five Centuries Of Change (Latin American Histories)



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Synopsis

With a land mass larger than the continental United States, a unique culture that is part European, African, and indigenous, and the world's ninth largest economy, Brazil is one of the most important--yet one of the least understood--nations in the world. Thomas Skidmore, a preeminent authority on Brazil, vividly traces the 500 years of Brazil's development. Its epic story begins in the wake of Vasco da Gama's historic circumnavigation of the globe, when another Portuguese vessel, commanded by Pedro Alvares Cabral, ran aground on the coast of Brazil in April 1500. From there Skidmore probes Portugal's remarkable command of the vast country in the face of the advances of the Spanish, French, and Dutch colonial interests; Brazil's compromised independence in 1822; its evolution as the center of world coffee cultivation; and the creation of the republic in the late nineteenth century. Here also are examinations of its unique forms of modernist art and literature, the dictatorship of Getulio Vargas and the military coups, and the ambitious reforms of current President Fernando Henrique Cardoso. Informed by the most recent scholarship available, Brazil explores the country's many blessings: ethnic diversity, a vibrant cultural life, and a wealth of natural resources. But, as Skidmore writes, the Brazilians must also grapple with a history of political instability and military rule, a deplorable environmental record, chronic inflation, and international debt. Mapping out its past as well as its future, this eloquent and detailed look at Brazil will be the standard history of the country for years to come.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Europeans first became aware of the huge territory called Brazil as a distant outpost of what the Portuguese conquerors called the Estado de India, a far-flung "network of coastal enclaves running along the Indian Ocean, from Mozambique, around the Malabar coast of India, and all the way to Macao on the coast of China." Thomas Skidmore, a noted historian of Latin America, writes that it quickly emerged as something more, however: a near-fabulous land of opportunity. An early gold rush outside Rio de Janeiro confirmed this view, and Brazil attracted huge numbers of immigrants, so many that the Portuguese crown was forced to limit the number of young men who attempted to leave their native country in favor of the newfound promised land. And, for a time, Skidmore continues, Brazil indeed led the world in the production of gold, diamonds, and other precious gems and minerals, making considerable fortunes for a lucky few. Governmental ineptitude assured that Brazil never translated that wealth into a comfortable life for all its inhabitants, a condition that has endured to the present. Skidmore traces the history of Brazil from the time of the European conquest to the late 1990s, yielding a highly useful one-volume history that students and general readers alike will enjoy. --Gregory McNamee

"Brazil is deftly written and carefully organized. Skidmore’s feelings about Brazil are well known, and he has produced a book that is very honest and, for this reason, very useful for the classroom. It skillfully connects themes of economic and political history with social issues, and more than many rival books brings in Brazil as a whole, not looking only at Rio and Sao Paulo. His book, in short, is badly needed and he is the obvious person to write it." --Robert M. Levine, Professor of History and Director of Latin American Studies, University of Miami, Coral Gables"Brazil is a fine example of how serious scholarship can be presented in a broad and readable way. It will undoubtedly become the most important textbook on Brazilian History in use, It is written in a style that is both informative and dramatic, and neatly weaves political, economic and cultural history in a seamless manner. Skidmore has taken on questions such as race, economic dependency, and revolution, and treated them seriously." --Jeffrey Lesse, Associate Professor of History, Connecticut College"This is a well-researched look at a fascinating country."--Booklist"The most up-to-date and thoroughly considered one-volume study on Brazil now available."--Brazil Magazine

I intend to do a more comprehensive review of this book in the future (after I use it in a Brazilian Culture class this semester), but I just wanted to make some important comments that refer the the second edition of the book, since all previous reviews refer to the first edition, particularly those of Leonardo Alves and Victor A. Vyssotsky that are critical, and justly so, of Skidmore’s book.In the

2009 (2nd) edition, Thomas E. Skidmore added an analysis of president Fernando Henrique Cardoso’s second term as well as commentary on Lula’s first term. He also "revamped" his "Suggestions for Further Reading" section (page xiii of the Preface). The author also added several images to the text "to relieve reader fatigue" (xiv).Most importantly, however, Skidmore writes in the Preface that "in response to withering criticism of my sloppy, incomplete, and sometimes flat wrong treatment of the colonial era, I have made major revisions to what used to be chapters 1 through 3 (rearranged in this edition’s chapters 1 and 3) and added a completely new chapter (this edition’s chapter 2)." (xiv)I hope this information is helpful to people that are considering buying this book. I would be interesting if the aforementioned reviewers could read the second edition and write subsequent reviews.July 20, 2011.

This is an excellent overview, clearly and simply written with little clutter, minutiae. The volume is slender and hits the highlights. It is written from a certain perspective (some Brazilians might disagree with the slant and attribution of credit for some aspects of the analysis). In particular, where the US fits into this history seems emphasized, which is probably important for an American audience. There is also an emphasis on economic history with data that is not often seen in these kinds of history.

product exactly as described - thank you!

I travel to Brasil every year. I educate myself about their history so I can understand them more. This allows more doors to open for me. This book has been excellent .

Superb summary of our giant neighbor to the south by the world’s outstanding Brazilianist.

Well written. Clear ,interestingIf you’re interested in Brazil this the book to get

Excellent!

As someone looking for a concise overview of Brazilian history I found Thomas.E. Skidmore’s book an excellent introduction. The prose is clear and analytical; and there are numerous graphs and diagrams that brilliantly illustrate some of the more difficult-to-digest statistics. Published in 1999 it is also (at the time of writing) the most up to date book on Brazilian history currently available: ending

with President Fernando Henrique Cardoso's unprecedented election to a second term in office.However, all praise aside I must also make a few reservations. Anyone looking for a narrative history of Brazil will be disappointed: this book is for undergraduates and therefore reads like an academic textbook. It is also rather disproportionately balanced towards the modern. Only 89 pages are dedicated to Brazil's first 400 years of history; whilst almost 150 pages are given over to this century. Brazil's recent past has hinged almost exclusively on its economy and there is considerable economic analysis throughout the book. Those not familiar with the technicalities of economics (myself included) should be warned: it can be quite hard going!Reservations aside though, there is still plenty to praise in this book and it is certainly a worthy starting point for anyone interested in Brazil.

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