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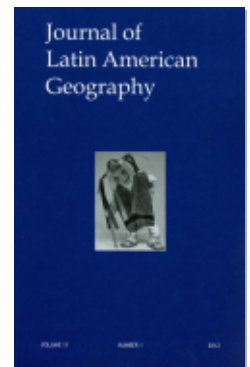
*La Geografía en América Latina: visión por países*  
(review)

Osvaldo Muñiz-Solari

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el asunto de la cobertura geográfica. Los compiladores dicen en el prologo que "... se decidió poner en práctica la idea de publicar un libro en el que se diera cuenta de la situación contemporánea de la Geografía en los distintos ámbitos latinoamericanos". Lamentablemente a pesar de que el libro pretende enfocarse en América Latina, como indica su título, no es exactamente así. Varios países no han sido incluidos en el presente trabajo... Bolivia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, y la República Dominicana no figuran en el libro, y tampoco se incluye a Brasil. Hasta cierto punto es comprensible la omisión de pequeños países con poca tradición geográfica, sin embargo, ignorar un país con una gran tradición geográfica y un sistema geográfico/universitario muy bien desarrollado como Brasil es inexplicable. Además, ¿a caso no es Brasil el país más grande, más numeroso, y quizás más prominente en toda Latinoamérica?

Otro problema muy grave es la falta de organización. Por una parte, está el hecho de que los capítulos son presentados en orden alfabético. Esto denota una pobre tarea editorial para lograr un orden de capítulos de forma más lógica. Tampoco hay un capítulo introductorio ni uno conclusorio que ayude a contextualizar y sintetizar la discusión y contenidos del libro. Otro problema de igual importancia ha sido la decisión de los compiladores de no insistir en que los autores cumplan sus instrucciones originales de "...adherirse a una serie de temas." Al contrario los compiladores decidieron dejar a cada autor "... presentar y examinar la situación de la Geografía, en su respectivo escenario, en la forma que mejor convino". Este método no permite paralelismo en la construcción del contenido de los capítulos, y consecuentemente, hay muy poca coherencia entre ellos. Algunos tratan sobre la educación primaria y secundaria en su país, mientras otros enfocan casi todo su ensayo a detallar un solo departamento universitario y su historia académica. Individualmente, hay capítulos útiles y bien escritos pero como conjunto el libro no cuenta con la rigurosidad necesaria de una publicación académica.

Por último, existen otros inconvenientes menores en el libro. Por una parte no hay un índice. No existe una bibliografía global en el libro, y la calidad de las bibliografías de los capítulos individuales varía dramáticamente. En dos de los capítulos, por ejemplo, solamente existe una sola citación académica. En otros capítulos, los autores han cargado la bibliografía con referencias a su propio trabajo, fuera o no relevante al tema. Finalmente, un detalle importante es que el texto es muy difícil de leer en muchas partes debido a problemas de redacción (p.e. "presiden tes", "Esdeadvertir qu e aunque", o "s e ha ocupado" p. 32) que a su vez denotan un pobre trabajo editorial. No obstante, ha sido una buena idea publicar un libro informativo sobre la enseñanza e investigación geográfica en los países de América Latina. Pero muchas veces, entre el dicho y el hecho hay mucho trecho. Lamentablemente, este es el caso con este libro.

Robert B. Kent

*Department of Urban Studies and Planning  
California State University, Northridge*

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*La Geografía en América Latina: visión por países.* Alvaro Sanchez-Crispin and Ana Maria Liberali (eds.). Buenos Aires: Gráfica Camail, 2009. 263 pp., tables and index. No price. Paper (ISBN: 978-987-97685-4-9).

As a Latin American geographer who has been a higher education administrator, a faculty and a visiting scholar in several universities since the 1970s I was eager to check this particular vision of Latin America.

*La Geografía en América Latina: visión por países* is a compilation of thirteen countries' geography written by 20 authors; six of the countries co-authored. It gives a wide variety of approaches as a result of the editors' intention to show the contemporary Latin American geography. Even when the editors consider themselves as *compiladores* they did not put together pieces of information from the countries involved in this production. In fact, as the editors explained in the prologue, the authors had total freedom to select and present their personal visions of each country's geography.

The book is organized by chapters, each one devoted to one country. An alphabetical order to consider an equal treatment and condition placed Argentina first; followed by Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Chile, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The thirteen chapters focus their attention mostly on higher education, curriculum formation, teaching and learning, and professional activities. Some authors consider the educational reforms in their countries as important milestones in the construction of secondary and higher education in geography; while others concentrate on the profession to prepare geographers. A third group of authors give extra importance to their professional associations and scientific meetings to analyze the development of geography. In general, all the authors explain how education in geography has evolved in their countries. Historical sequence of facts and achievements by native and, in some cases, foreign geographers precedes descriptions of curricular development in higher education. Some contributors create a useful relationship between research and publication to explain the evolution and progress of various academic institutions.

Geography books on Latin America published by scholars in the region are not common. This example may represent a good endeavor by the editors and authors who have spent a great deal of time to produce a publication of multinational characteristics. Even when the objective stated by the editors to deal with "the contemporary situation of geography in the different Latin American contexts" is not totally reached, the authors make a clear effort to describe their countries' formal education in geography. Yet, it is interesting to notice a lack of profound analysis to understand and address important scientific trends in Latin American geography. Certainly, any person interested in knowing the 'Geography of Latin America' will expect to learn more than just a mere description of geography education in several countries. A vision of contemporary geography related to theoretical work and scientific advance in geographic thoughts is almost absent and it may represent important sources of knowledge in this book. The incomplete visualization of Latin American geography is magnified by the exclusion of Brazil from those countries invited to show their experiences. There is no possible justification to the absence of this South American giant. Brazil played a critical role in the building process of the Latin American geography in the past. Likewise, Brazilian geographers and institutions devoted to the field have had, and will continue to have, a strong influence in the construction of the contemporary geography in Latin America.

The last part of this review focuses on the importance of quality when a book is published to demonstrate facts based upon reliable information. In particular, this book shows in some chapters a lack of consistency to present bibliographic sources in which authors or years do not match with those presented in several paragraphs. Other mistakes are incomplete references in a bibliography and total absence of bibliography in several chapters. In some cases, their authors consider an erroneously convenient replacement by using a list of Internet websites with no reference to authors or institutions.

Facts and information need to be supported by clear and proved sources to be considered reliable-- otherwise, they fall into the category of simple opinions. This is the case when the reader is exposed to several extensive chapters and tables with no

reference to original sources of information. It goes without saying that this kind of evidence represents both a lack of the authors' academic preparation as well as an inefficient work conducted by the editors. A complete peer-review process cannot be avoided in any academic production that is published and exposed to the scrutiny of the academic world. Unfortunately, there is still a misinterpretation among so many geographers in Latin American countries of what academic quality is considered as standard around the world. In this regard, this work produced by scholars in the region, with the exception of the excellent chapter written by the authors on Mexico, could not be placed at the same level of similar books on Latin America published abroad.

Osvaldo Muñiz-Solari  
Department of Geography  
Texas State University, San Marcos

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*In the Shadow of Melting Glaciers: Climate Change and Andean Society*, Mark Carey. Oxford University Press, 2010. xi + 273 pp., maps, photos, notes, appendix, bibliog., and index. \$24.95 paper (ISBN: 978-0-19-539607-2).

Relatively few historians have paid much attention to the risks to settlements and population clusters in the high Andes from their most valuable water reservoirs, the glacial tongues that embrace so many of their formerly sacred peaks. Droughts, occasional floods, and the more regular and cyclical climatic effects are much better known than the spectacular and deadly effects of massive glacier melting. Mark Carey takes such devastating episodes as the focus of his elegant and comprehensive survey of such events in northern Peru during the latter half of the twentieth century. The book opens with a set of key questions that relate scientific issues to reactions of the local population who after all have been adapting to the risks of their environments for several millennia. How do different people think about climate change? How do they feel, respond, and recover when glaciers rapidly disappear and melt water produces floods that wipe away whole towns, and kill thousands of people? Equally significant, how have external experts, called in to assess conditions and risks, and plan for possible solutions, fared when meeting the knowledge of the locals? Have, what the author calls "disaster economics", been beneficial to the various communities involved?

The story begins with a return to the horrors of the Huaraz disaster of 1941 (the *Martyred City* of Oliver-Smith, 1986) as recounted by selected personal testimonies. Not just the immediate local effects of the disaster that killed most of the wealth urbanites in the Santa valley, but the resultant sudden national imagery of Peruvians risking here-to-fore unknown/unappreciated disasters. This disaster led to the establishment of a Lakes Commission, that was to be the guide to applying science and engineering to flood risks. Chapters three and four examine the accomplishments of the Commission including its glacial lake inventory and classification system, as well as the following economic ventures and infrastructures that followed: roads, hydropower plants and tourism. The modernization of the state in the 1940s and '50s included disaster recovery under the direction of foreign agencies. Yet Carey makes clear that only some recommendations were accepted by the affected locals; macro and micropolitics became embroiled.

While glacial-melt floods marked the forties and fifties, the next two decades witnessed their ice counterparts—the massive avalanches that equally brought death and destruction to thousands. The state response—hazard zoning—fell on many local deaf