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collection is highly recommended. If you only read one item on African women this year, read the introduction, which I recommend as a state-of-the-art essay in African women's history. Then I hope you go on to read the entire volume for its insights and information on the history and current situation of African women.

Kathleen Sheldon
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¹Peter Gutkind and Peter Waterman, eds. African Social Studies: A Radical Reader. New York: Monthly Review Press, 1977.

John C. Super and Thomas C. Wright, eds. Food, Politics, and Society in Latin America. Lincoln, Nebraska: University of Nebraska Press, 1985. 261 pp. Index.

The ten essays collected in Food, Politics, and Society in Latin America offer a thorough critique of current understanding of land-use practices and agricultural production in Latin America. In focusing on linkages between political structure and the region's continuing problems with agricultural production and food supply, the volume provides a new and important context for our view of Latin American society.

The book presents work written from markedly different perspectives and concerned with a wide range of periods of Latin American history. Essays cover both general issues (such as urban provisioning in Latin America history, the Green Revolution, comparative effects of United States food aid) and more specific concerns (diet in nineteenth-century Peru, revolutionary approaches to food in Cuba and Nicaragua, food dependency and malnutrition in Venezuela during the oil boom).

A third of the essays supply general background to food-and-politics issues and provide historiographical analysis. Outstanding among these pieces is Roland Bergman's "Subsistence Agriculture in Latin America," which presents a revisionist view of the supposed "irrationality" and inefficiency of the subsistence techniques employed by sixty percent

of Latin America's agricultural population. In an innovative approach to the debate, Bergman combines his extensive fieldwork in Mexican small-holding regions and in the diverse micro-climatic zones of the Andes with the wide body of literature on subsistence cultures in Africa and Asia. Bergman concludes that subsistence agriculture has remained important in Latin America not as a component of a backwards "traditional" rural sector, but because subsistence techniques work quite well in meeting the day-to-day needs of their practitioners. Although he admits that subsistence agriculture may have limits, Bergman does not think those limits have been reached.

The remaining essays provide grist for the mill by presenting recent research on more specific Latin American food-production issues. The essay by James W. Wilkie and Manuel Moreno-Ibáez on food-production trends in the era of modern land reform, for example, brings into question several common conceptions of Latin American land use in the late twentieth century. The two authors show that, contrary to popular belief, many Latin American countries have been quite successful at producing food at a rate greater than population growth. Further, Wilkie and Moreno-Ibáez suggest that it is difficult to assign food production per capita successes and failures to general similarities or differences in the agrarian policies or political structures of the countries. The authors show that the marked successes in food per capita terms of two countries which have had major land reforms in the twentieth century - Bolivia and Mexico - indicate that land reform by itself does not necessarily lead to inefficient land use, as is sometimes believed. The essay demonstrates that long-term trends in food production must be studied in the context of the distinct historical evolutions of the twenty Latin American countries.

As one end result of its combination of diverse disciplines and topics, Food, Politics, and Society in Latin America places Latin American land-use practices in the context of global structures and processes. Interestingly, the book portrays a Latin America that shares many of its agricultural problems with the highly-developed societies of North America and

Western Europe. The book suggests that the simultaneous existence of highly efficient commercial-agricultural production and tremendous difficulties of distribution of basic food-stuffs among people is not unique to Latin America, nor to "under"- or "un"-developed areas, but is a global problem and must necessarily become a global concern.

The editors should be given credit for a fine job of binding together the diverse themes of the book with their introductory essays. As well as supplying a context for the work of the other scholars, these essays stand on their own as interesting and useful syntheses.

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Tad Szulc. Fidel: A Critical Portrait. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1986. 660 pp. Bibliography, and index. \$19.95.

Since the outbreak of Revolution in Cuba there has been a myriad of articles and books written about Fidel Castro Ruz and his role in the Revolution. Much of the literature has been political in nature: either siding with, or vociferously opposing, the Castro Revolution. The majority of the works barely discuss Castro's life, and those that do focus on it beginning in 1952. In Fidel: A Critical Portrait, Tad Szulc, the New York Times reporter who broke the Bay of Pigs story, is one of the first to write a biography of Fidel that delves into his early years.

Szulc's work strays from the recent work on Revolutionary Cuba's History. Instead of attempting to analyze the effects of the Revolutionary government on Cuban society, as the recent Cubanologists have done, he instead chooses to follow the narrative-biographical approach of many of the writers of Cuba during the 1960's. The result is a useful synthesis of Castro's life that makes no attempt to analyze or portray contemporary Cuba.

Szulc does an excellent job of integrating the numerous but fragmented accounts of Fidel's early life and the Revolutionary movement to provide a