

BOOKSHELF

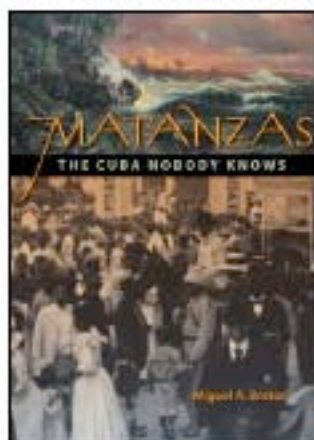
Matanzas, magical powers of state and making dance

Periodically, *CubaNews* offers reviews of books we think will interest our readers. This month, our books look at the city of Matanzas, an “American insider’s perspective on Cuba,” the “magical” powers of the Castro revolution and Caribbean dance.

MATANZAS: THE CUBA NOBODY KNOWS

Matanzas — the name literally means “slaughters” — is the Cuban city nearest the United States. Known at the heyday of the 19th-century sugar boom as the “Athens of Cuba,” it is renowned for its art music and rich African heritage. It’s also the place where Latin American baseball began. Yet most Americans have never heard of it.

“*Matanzas: The Cuba Nobody Knows*” by Miguel A. Bretos (ISBN 978-0-8130-3432-4, \$27.50 hardcover) remedies this historical oversight.



Though he came to the United States as a Pedro Pan child and has lived all over the world, his family is still closely tied to the city where they lived for generations.

After 40 years, Bretos has returned to his homeland “with the longing of an exile, the anticipation of a child, the curiosity of a visitor, the resentment of a victim, and — hopefully — the objectivity of a scholar.”

Through the book’s 336 pages, Bretos unfolds the Matanzas story from the aboriginal Taínos to the coming of revolution with solid research, wit, clarity and the kind of vivid detail that can come only from an insider.

But he also deftly inserts Matanzas into a larger picture. More than local history, this original work is Cuban history from a local perspective.

Bretos is retired as senior scholar from the Smithsonian Institution’s National Portrait Gallery, and is the author of four books, including “*Cuba and Florida: An Exploration of a Historical Connection, 1593-1991*.”

Author Manuel Barcia calls the Matanzas book “a deep analytical and a warm personal approach of the history of Bretos’s place of birth. A funny, intelligent, elaborate and erudite work, this book will certainly graciously stand the passing of time.”

Adds fellow author Dick Cluster: “A fine document of Cuban culture, a history and memoir of a charming and oft-neglected city, infused with an émigré’s love and longing for the lost place.”

Details: Stephanie Williams, Publicity Mgr., University Press of Florida, 15 NW 15th Street, Gainesville, FL 32611. Tel: (800) 680-1955. Email: sw@upf.com. URL: www.upf.com.

CUBA RISING: AN INSIDER’S PERSPECTIVE:

“*Cuba Rising, An American Insider’s Perspective*” by former White House staffer and foreign policy expert Jonathan Showe, is based on the author’s nearly 80 visits to the enigmatic island nation over the last dozen years.

Showe credits “persistence, tenacity, curiosity — and modest irreverence for U.S. travel restrictions” as the answer to how he keeps getting in. Showe’s background in the military combined with a graduate degree in international relations resulted in his joining first the Nixon and then the Ford White Houses, where he was involved in U.S. economic policy and international trade negotiations.

Even when his career evolved to include a U.S. multinational corporation, his work analyzing, writing and speaking about Cuba continued. As Showe succinctly puts it, “How can a small island with few resources and of little consequence stand toe-to-toe with the global superpower for 50 years? It can’t, but it did.”

“*Cuba Rising*” (ISBN 978-0-615-32361-9, Global Insights Press, \$26.95 hardcover) is available at www.amazon.com and bookstores.

Details: Michael Hemp, The History Company, 6 Merrill Way, Carmel Valley, CA 93924. Tel: (831) 659-2112. Fax: (831) 659-3113. Email: mkhemp@thehistorycompany.com. URL: www.cubarising.net.

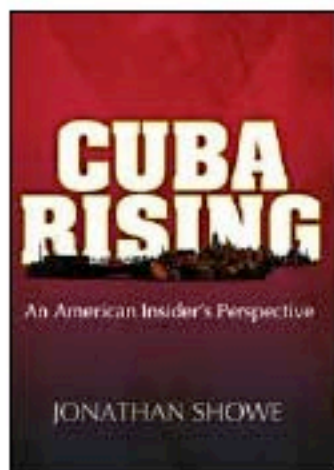
HIDDEN POWERS OF STATE

Despite its hard-nosed emphasis on the demystifying realism of Marxist-Leninist ideology, the political imagery of the 1959 Cuban revolution — and the state that followed — conjures up its own magical seductions and fantasies of power.

Kenneth Routon, in his soon-to-be-released book “*Hidden Powers of State in the Cuban Imagination*,” shows how magic practices and political culture are entangled in Cuba in unusual and intimate ways.

In the 208-page book (ISBN 978-0-8130-3483-6, price \$69.95 cloth), Routon, visiting assistant professor of anthropology at Christopher Newport University, describes not only how the monumentality of the state arouses magical sensibilities and popular images of its hidden powers, but also explores the ways in which revolutionary officialdom has, in recent years, tacitly embraced and harnessed vernacular fantasies of power to the national agenda.

This study brings anthropology and history together by examining the relationship between ritual and state power in revolution-



ary Cuba, paying particular attention to the roles of memory and history in the construction of shared political imaginaries.

“A fascinating, timely and deftly balanced account of the power of magic and the state in revolutionary Cuba,” says Raquel Romberg, author of “*Healing Dramas: Divination and Magic in Modern Puerto Rico*.” “This compelling and evocative book transports readers to the secret and mysterious alleys of religious and political workings, the ritual production of selective historical memory, and the current statecraft of religious appropriations.”

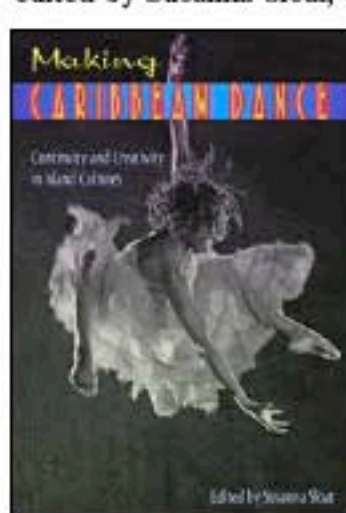
Adds Christine Ayorinde, author of “*Afro-Cuban Religiosity, Revolution and National Identity*”: “A valuable contribution to scholarship in Cuban studies and the study of religion in the Americas, Routon goes beyond other works in analyzing the Cuban capacity for combining apparently incompatible beliefs such as socialism and various Afro-Cuban practices.

“He also provides a number of important insights into the processes by which magical and ritual idioms of power feed the political imagery and exercise of power in Cuba, and vice-versa.”

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MAKING CARIBBEAN DANCE

Caribbean dance is a broad category that can include everything from nightclubs to sacred ritual. “*Making Caribbean Dance*,” edited by Susanna Sloat, connects the dance



of the islands with their rich multicultural histories and complex identities.

Delving deep into the many forms of secular, social, carnival, experimental and performance dance, the book (ISBN 978-0-8130-3467-6, \$34.95 cloth) explores some of

the region’s most mysterious and beloved, as well as rare and little-known, dance traditions.

From the evolution of Indian dance in Trinidad to the barely known rituals of *los misterios* in the Dominican Republic, this 352-page volume looks at the vibrant movement vocabulary of the islands, with distinctive chapters on such topics as experimental dance makers in Puerto Rico to the government’s use of dance to shape national identity in Barbados.

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