

Densely written and ambitious in scope, this book makes a substantial contribution to scholarship on globalization, industrial geography, and political economy.

Dina Mahnaz Siddiqi

DUBOIS, LINDSAY. *The Politics of the Past in an Argentine Working-Class Neighbourhood*. [Anthropological Horizons.] University of Toronto Press, Toronto [etc.] 2005. xiv, 283 pp. £40.00; \$60.00; DOI: 10.1017/S0020859007092966.

Argentina is a country with a violent and complex recent history which provokes widely different views. The perspectives on the struggle between the traditional land-owning elite and the emerging urban working classes and the eventual civil war between left-wing guerrillas and a militarized state diverge widely. This has much to do with the idiosyncratic legacy of Peronism, the political offshoot of the personalist regime of Juan Domingo Perón (1895–1974). The interpretation of Peronist influence on the political history of late twentieth-century Argentina continues to haunt historians. There is no doubt that the military hated the Peronists; during the period of his exile (1955–1973) carrying a photograph of Perón or his deceased wife Evita could lead to arrest and prison. The military interventions of 1966 and 1976 were explicit attempts to put an end to Peronist reforms and to silence Peronist activists. The problem has always been that Peronism was not a clear-cut party. On the one hand, Perón and his party succeeded in obtaining unswerving loyalty from the Peronist followers, so much so, that this emotional loyalty continues today. On the other hand, the party hosted widely divergent tendencies, ranging from extremely radical youth movements to the neo-liberal president Menem.

In the light of this conflictive past, Lindsay DuBois's book, *The Politics of the Past*, may certainly be welcomed. On the basis of a long-term residence in one of Buenos Aires's working-class neighbourhoods, José Ingenieros, this Canadian anthropologist attempts to understand the ways this past has been perceived and processed among its inhabitants. Because of the methodological problems of this endeavour and the permanently contrasting stories and perceptions encountered by DuBois, the book is also a case study in the problems and ambiguities of oral history research.

The book is divided into two parts. First, the history of the neighbourhood is presented, starting with its illegal occupation (*toma*) in 1973. In the second part, it demonstrates how the memories of the historical occupants of the neighbourhood widely diverge and how this poses particular problems for anthropological and historical research.

These problems present themselves in full force already in the first part, in which DuBois tries to unravel the initial period of the neighbourhood when people from different backgrounds decided to take on the government and occupied a complex of buildings that for a long time had been designed for renovation. Interestingly enough, it is almost impossible to come to an accurate and unambiguous account of this period. DuBois observes that “[c]onflicting scenarios circulate [...], even among people who personally participated in the occupation of the apartments” (p. 59). Part of this can be explained by the illegal nature of the event which implied a good deal of secrecy, but as the book develops it becomes increasingly clear that it should also be considered the direct result of the very conflictive and atomized nature of Argentine society in the wake of a polarized and violent past.

The history of the neighbourhood starts in the contradictory, chaotic, but also somehow exuberant and hopeful years before 1973. These were the years that the Peronist masses were preparing for the return of their beloved, but very sick leader. Although Perón's return was short-lived (he died in 1974) and conflictive (he took distance from his most loyal radical followers), in the period before and during his return the grip of the military and the conservatives loosened, giving rise to social and political mobilization among the urban masses. The occupation of José Ingenieros can be seen as the result of this situation. Different more or less organized groups of families started to invade the buildings and occupied apartments. DuBois does an excellent job in describing the improvisation of the *toma* and the contrasting motives of the families, some of whom were strongly politically motivated, others just trying to get affordable housing. For the years to come, the historical memory of the neighbourhood would be characterized by this contrast between political and individual motives.

These contrasting visions acquired different overtones in the context of the political developments in Argentina. This was especially clear with regard to the dictatorship of Videla that lasted from 1976 to 1983. This was a particularly polarized period and José Ingenieros got its share of repression and disappearances. However, part of its population sympathized with the military project and in a way took advantage of the new order. These contrasting historical experiences are, of course, reflected in the interviews presented in this book. Most importantly, however, they result in some kind of mnemonic silence. The inhabitants of the neighbourhood largely prefer to ignore the military period and tend to concentrate on the heroic period of the occupation and the years of solidarity that preceded it. In a history workshop co-organized by the author, the dictatorship that is generally recognized as a crucial period in recent Argentine history was conveniently overlooked by most participants. DuBois perceives a "resounding silence of politics" (144). This was partly the result of local understandings of politics and the resulting emphasis on daily experiences. The diverging historical visions and interpretations appear to have been more important, however. The struggle about history and the interpretation of the military dictatorship that has engulfed Argentine society until our day also led to a silenced memory in José Ingenieros.

DuBois's book is interesting because it allows for a more local and working-class understanding of larger scale political and economic processes in late twentieth-century Argentina. In this way her work can be seen in line with the work on local expressions of Peronism by Daniel James and Javier Auyero. Her focus on the local perceptions of the Videla regime demystifies the simplistic contrast between good and bad Argentines that figures so prominently in the work of many post-dictatorship observers. The inhabitants of José Ingenieros had to work and live in a local setting that was politically highly sensitive, and their memories recount the daily pragmatism that was necessary to survive. The integrated analysis of this history and its subsequent interpretation can be considered the strong point of the book.

Still, the book is disappointing in other respects. Most importantly, its analysis of the obvious tensions and ambiguities among the neighbourhood inhabitants is somewhat shallow. The author has not always been able to sort out the background of silences and contradictions in the historical accounts of her interviewees. Sometimes she stresses their local nature; in other instances, she focuses on the class character of this working-class neighbourhood. In several instances she observes how the silences and historical distortions are a more or less conscious strategy of people who are unable or unwilling to face their past

actions. There is no doubt that the human mind and memory are contradictory and complex, and that all of these issues may have played a part, but DuBois's book lacks some kind of analytical and interpretative framework. There now exist an abundant literature on the relationships between traumatic experiences and social memory and it would have been very useful if she had inserted her analysis in conversation to this literature. Part of the problem of the book may also be that the result of DuBois's long fieldwork has been somewhat disappointing. The author mentions the reluctance among the neighbourhood inhabitants to talk about the past and the difficulty of touching certain themes. Also her accounts of the two historical workshops do not give the impressions of a population that is greatly receptive to her interest in analysing the recent past.

Finally, and for this the author may not entirely be to blame as it may also point at the slow process of producing academic books nowadays, the views in this book published in 2005 already belong to history. DuBois's fieldwork was done in 1991! This was the period of the government of Carlos Menem, who did everything he could to bury the past and created a political climate where silence was honoured. However, this situation has dramatically changed since her fieldwork. The struggle for memory in Argentine society has nowadays become more intense than ever. Not only within society, but also in the realm of politics, the interpretation of the recent past has become a hot issue. It may well be that the silence among the inhabitants of José Ingenieros encountered by DuBois in 1991, has now been replaced by a much more urgent debate on the neighbourhood's history and the political positions taken by the various inhabitants. Although DuBois's focus on the day-to-day history of a Buenos Aires neighbourhood remains a valuable complement to our knowledge, her book may be already out of date at the moment it is published.

Michiel Baud

MARTYN, ELIZABETH. *The Women's Movement in Post-Colonial Indonesia. Gender and nation in a new democracy.* [Women in Asia Series.] RoutledgeCurzon, London [etc.] 2005. xi, 264 pp. £60.00; DOI: 10.1017/S0020859007102960.

In commemoration of the anniversary of the first Indonesian Women's Congress, in December 2006 the National Commission on Violence Against Women (Komnas Perempuan) organized a gathering where women active today in NGOs and mass-based organizations could meet with older women who had been victimized by the 1965–1966 anti-communist pogrom. The meeting was part of Komnas Perempuan's larger project of exploring a gender-based transitional justice mechanism to deal with past human-rights violations against women. Aside from discussing the Suharto dictatorship's persecution of members of the Indonesian Women Movement (Gerwani), the largest women's organization in the nation's history, the attendees talked about how the dictatorship also destroyed their knowledge of women's history. The post-1965 generation knew almost nothing about the experience of women activists before the 1965 debacle.

Since Suharto's fall in 1998, Indonesian women activists have revealed his dictatorship's patterns of state violence against women and its violations of women's rights. While this struggle has borne fruit in the increasing awareness and acknowledgement of violence against women as a punishable crime, it has been rivalled by powerful, conservative Islamic forces that wish to make Islamic law the national law and remove women from the public