African purity that became contaminated in Brazil, contamination is still an issue in Dantas’ and Capone’s work, but the source of contamination becomes the anthropologists themselves. However, these criticisms notwithstanding, both books are important and welcome contributions to the literature available to English-speaking readers on the religious practices of the African Diaspora in Latin America.

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That Brazilian regional identities are racially charged is a truism. From naming practices in cuisine to the possibility of requesting a gaúcha at a brothel, elite and popular understandings of these identities belie the idea of a coherent “Brazilian race.” Until recently, however, English-language scholarship that hoped to interrogate this idea tended to project São Paulo and/or Rio de Janeiro conceptions of race onto the rest of the country or focus solely on ideas of blackness or Afro-Brazilianness. Studies of immigrants and their descendants who did not fit neatly into the classic black-white dyad helped to complicate these narratives, but regional approaches were still unexplored. Though scholars like Barbara Weinstein have noted that regional difference is “more pronounced” in Brazil than in other countries, the dominant view still remains that of the metropolis.

With *The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality*, Stanley E. Blake aims to challenge the historiographical dominance of “national” identity by privileging the local and the regional. His particular interest is to uncover the autochthonous roots of nordestino identity within the racialized ideas of the region’s elite during the First Republic (1889-1930) and the Estado Novo (1937-1945). Difference thus conceived appears everywhere from criminology and anthropology to mental and social hygiene programs. Most significantly, Blake argues that northeastern elites imagine regional identity for their own purposes and national interests, and thus contribute to broader conceptions of race and participate in the political configurations of twentieth-century Brazil.

Blake brings a new lens to some familiar actors, analyzing their writings and actions as growing out of or becoming constituent of something particularly northeastern. Intellectuals Raymundo Nina Rodrigues and Euclydes da Cunha brought the metropolitan worldviews of São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro to the Northeast, seeking to understand their experiences in racial terms. These vi-
sions of the Northeast traveled back to the metropoles, granting the nordestino a privileged role in early discussions of brasilidade. Ulysses Pernambucano’s research into the relationships between race and mental disorders in the Northeast similarly informed national eugenicist discussions in the 1920s and 1930s. The activities of Pernambuco’s mental health services show that, rather than passively receiving notions of science from outside, local physicians made novel attempts at scientific research. The Northeast’s regional peculiarity is further demonstrated when Blake points out a paradox: Pernambucano’s theories connecting race and mental hygiene found favor at a national level but endangered his own career within heavily Afro-descendant Pernambuco.

Blake’s argument for the Northeast’s centrality in national identity construction is most compelling when he contrasts the views of Pernambucans Agamemnon Magalhães and Gilberto Freyre. Both men placed nordestino identity at the center of brasilidade but on seemingly opposite grounds. Magalhães saw the rugged, hard-working nordestino as “quintessentially Brazilian,” the core of a corporatist Brazil. Blake convincingly demonstrates that during Magalhães’s administration as interventor under the Estado Novo, he marshaled the power of the state to stamp out ideas of racial difference—supposedly dangerous both for their backwardness and their individuality. Manifestations of Afro-Brazilian culture such as candomblé represented grave threats to the progress of the Brazilian nation. The Boasian ideas of Freyre and other anthropologists, which sought to decouple ideas of race from ideas of progress and hygiene, were liberal anathema to Magalhães. Blake concludes that Freyre’s position gained traction nationally by representing the nordestinos as possible active citizens, but Magalhães’s influence ensured that corporatist and homogenizing ideas held greater local sway. While Freyre’s writings and publications such as Estudos Afro-Brasileiros disseminated outward from the Northeast, forming the foundations for post-positivist conceptions of “racial democracy,” the Northeast remained paradoxically trapped in a corporatist model that denied the existence of racial difference.

Perhaps more useful to historians of regional identities writ large, Blake interrogates the very notion of region. He adeptly demonstrates how “the Northeast” emerges, beginning with studies by provincial and national Institutes of Geography and then with “experiential” components such as drought, hunger, and disease, which deepened an idea of lived space. Finally, his fruitful discussion of the Northeast as an imaginary place inhabited by nordestinos—different from yet profoundly connected to other Brazilians—demonstrates the benefits of regional analysis. Omnivorous in his methods, Blake helps move beyond the traditional economic and political explanations of regional difference.
Blake’s argument would have been even stronger if he had offered a more cross-regional or comparative analysis. This would have helped the reader better understand what makes his a nordestino story, a Brazilian story, a Latin American story, and/or a “modern” story. As it stands, the narrative appears in places to be a history of “big ideas” in a local context rather than an argument for Pernambucan or nordestino exceptionalism. Blake struggles with the tension between inhabitants of the sertão and the coastal mestiço, at times labeling Magalhães’s paens to the sertanejo a condemnation of mestiços, while at other times presenting them as a defense of an amalgamated nordestino “race.” A synthetic conclusion would have ameliorated these sticky wickets of scale and terminology.

Blake’s readers should familiarize themselves with Paulo Fontes’s Um Nordeste em São Paulo. Taking a different approach from Vigorous Core, Fontes explores the evolution of nordestino identity outside the geographic confines of Brazil’s northeast. Here in rapidly urbanizing and industrializing São Paulo, sergipanos, bahianos, and pernambucanos most clearly become amalgamated into nordestinos. In labor relations, local politics, and everyday life, being nordestino appears more complex and contested than in Blake’s elite and strictly regional vision. Rather than reify a São Paulo-based idea of race and identity, Fontes and Blake together reveal that regional identities have “domestic” lives but also travel and change in consequential ways for regional and national histories.

On the whole, The Vigorous Core of Our Nationality will prove valuable in a wide variety of contexts. Chapters on racial thought in the First Republic and the Magalhães/Freyre debates could serve as stand-alone readings in survey courses on Brazil or race/ethnicity in Latin America. Blake’s most significant contribution, however, is his sustained commitment to the genre of regional history outside of Brazil’s southeast. Books such as these are indispensable in writing histories of a country as vast and complex as Brazil.

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La detallada etnografía que elabora Kiran Asher sobre la aprobación de la Ley 70 de 1993 y su implementación entre 1993 y 1995 se constituye en un aporte central de su libro. Enmarcada en el reconocimiento de la diversidad étnica y cultural de la nación colombiana, esta ley abrió el camino para que las comunidades negras se reconocieran como grupos étnicos diferenciados y