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**The Human Tradition in Brazil.** Peter M. Beattie, Ed. Wilmington, DE: SR Books, 2004. (The Human Tradition around the World Series, no. 7). 304 pp. ISBN: 0-8420-5039-6.

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The Brazilian and North-American historians, authors of this collection, aim their 15 essays at an English-speaking public. It is, as the editor states in his introduction, a “volume of life stories,” and the lives portrayed are those of “common” Brazilians who, for many different reasons, have become part of Brazil’s public life, and of Brazilian history. The men and women here portrayed come from different social classes, belong to different ethnic groups, and have different political ideologies. They have, nevertheless, one commonality: none of them has belonged to the aristocracy, the upper, or the dominant classes. There are no emperors, queens, presidents, or ministers, the traditional figures to appear in history books. Rather, they are everyday people who came to participate in public life, and to have an influence in Brazilian society. “Common” in their origins, however, they have distinguished themselves from their peers through their work, sometimes by their social or political activism, or by their intervention in the lives of their community.

These men and women come from all walks of life: novelists, samba composers, soccer players, a mystic, slum dwellers, a native Brazilian turned politician. Through their stories, the authors of these essays have sought to achieve a representative overview of Brazilian history from the nineteenth century to the present day, taking the reader from Brazil’s independence from Portugal in 1822, to the presidency of Luiz Inácio da Silva, Lula, in the first years of the twentieth-first century. Such overview offers, at the same time, an *alternative* history of the country, by examining how Brazilians from various backgrounds accepted or rejected different concepts of national identity, particularly the official concept of nationhood at specific historical moments.

Part of the series “The Human Tradition around the World,” *The Human Tradition in Modern Brazil* shares in the general purpose of the series to “personalize” (i), or give a human face to the many events and conflicts that shape history. The essays in the volume examine history through life stories of everyday people, an approach characteristic of the new social history, a field that emerged in the social-political aftermath of the 1960’s and 1970’s. It is during that period when alternative voices—voices that can be understood as counter-ideological because they have spoken against the dominant ideology of the status quo—start to be consistently heard in Brazil and in other countries: voices of women, of racial and ethnic minorities, of gays and lesbians.

Some of these voices are recorded in *The Human Tradition in Modern Brazil*, although the contributors do not write only about men and women who entered public life in the second half of the twentieth century. Rather, the essays follow Brazil’s history as seen and understood from the perspective of the story/the history of “ordinary” people since the beginning of Brazil’s nationhood. Thus, the first essay in the volume focuses on the public life of Daniel Gomes de Freitas (b. 1806), a career army officer whose life illustrates the effects Brazil’s political independence and its immediate aftermath had on people’s lives. As in this first essay by Hendrik Kraay, the studies that follow seek “to illuminate how different historical actors experienced, . . . and responded to historical moments of broad importance” (Beattie, Introduction xvi).

The fifteen life stories in the volume are chronologically organized in four sections: “The Independence and Early Imperial Generations (1800-1869);” “The Generations of the Late Empire (1870-1889) and the Old Republic (1889-1930);” “The Populist-Era Generations (1930-1959);” and “The Generations of Authoritarian Military Rule and Neoliberalism (1960 to the Twenty-First Century).” A short essay covering each specific historical period comes at the beginning of each section of the book and focuses on the social-political context that shaped the biographies that follow. After each essay, the reader will find a helpful list of “Suggested Readings.” These bibliographies are organized from the more specific titles on the life previously examined, to broader social, historical, political, and even literary topics related to the essay. Peter M. Beattie’s general introduction explains both the methodology that guided the selection of essays and the volume’s organization.

Following the effort to examine national history through the life stories of common men and women, the volume reflects also the hybridism that characterizes Brazilian society; a society, says Beattie, in which “The modern and the traditional, the popular and erudite, the public and private came to interpenetrate one another and to coexist in

unique combinations that were not fixed but fluid" (Introduction xiv). Thus, one of the most positive aspects of this collection is how well it reflects the diversity of Brazilian people in terms of race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and gender (although only three essays, out of fifteen, focus on women).

The people whose stories are here recorded include some names easily recognized by most Brazilians, such as Dom Hélder Câmara, the famous archbishop of Recife and Olinda, in the Northeastern state of Pernambuco, whose name became synonymous with social justice and resistance against the military dictatorship; Geraldo Pereira, the legendary samba composer; or Domingos da Guia, an equally legendary name, in this case, of a soccer player. Although these are well-known names in Brazil, they are not (with the exception, perhaps, of Dom Hélder's) the usual names one expects to find in a history book. A few names are less known as, for example, Daniel Gomes de Freitas, mentioned above. Others include novelist Adolfo Caminha, author of the well-read *Bom Crioulo* (1895), an abolitionist novel also considered the first explicitly gay work of fiction in Brazil; Cândido Mariano da Silva Rondon, who became known for his work among Brazilian indigenous tribes in the early twentieth century; Carolina Maria de Jesus, a Black slum-dweller from São Paulo who rose to notoriety in the late 1950's, when her diary was discovered and excerpts published in a magazine (her diary was then published in book form in 1960); and Mario Juruna, a Xavante Indian who became a congressman in 1982.

The volume, nevertheless, aims at a non-Brazilian public, for whom most of the lives here studied are lesser known, or altogether unfamiliar. But even for a native of Brazil, Beattie's book is very stimulating reading, for it offers a fresh look at the country's history. And by bringing together the lives of Brazilians we only read about in a sporadic and sparse manner, *The Human Tradition in Modern Brazil* provides a strong and lively portrait of how everyday men and women have engaged in history making. Not only historians will find the volume useful, but also scholars and students of Brazilian culture and related fields. It is highly recommended for anyone with an interest in Brazil.