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Review of Cowboys of the Americas

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little was to be found. The few books, articles, extracts from travel logs that existed offered casual observations of these horsemen rather than a focused, coherent study. Only Edward Larocque Tinker's seminal work, *The Horsemen of the Americas and the Literature They Inspired*, offered a scholarly incursion into the field.

With *Cowboys of the Americas*, Richard W. Slatta adds to his already substantial work on the subject and does much to fill in the gaps left by Tinker, offering a coherent comparative study of *all* the horsemen of the Great Plains from Patagonia to Alberta and even Hawaii. Divided into thirteen chapters, this book explores specific aspects of the horsemen: historical origin, dress, work, range life, labor relations with employers, equestrian sporting events and other forms of entertainment, their role in displacing the Amerindian populations, and their place in the emerging modern, urbanized world. In each case, Slatta studies the gaucho of Argentina, the huaso (guaso) of Chile, the llanero of Venezuela and Colombia, the vaquero (charro) of Mexico, the cowboy of the United States and Canada. This contrastive approach makes it easy to highlight similarities and differences among the various types. Slatta reminds the reader throughout of the formative roles of both geography and historical currents in the evolution of these horsemen.

The text is amply illustrated with photographs, posters, and prints. Those familiar with Forbis's *The Cowboys in the Time-Life Old West* series will recognize some of the photographs of the American cowboy. The pen sketches and water colors of the Latin American horsemen, however, are new and useful illustrations of dress and gear not familiar to the North American reader.

For the general reader new to the topic, Slatta provides an eminently readable and delightful text, unburdened with discussion of technical details or conflicting points of view. These are reserved for the end notes, which the scholar

Cowboys of the Americas. By Richard W. Slatta. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990. Introduction, illustrations, photographs, notes, glossary, bibliographical essay, selected bibliography, index. xiv + 306 pp. \$35.00.

Some twenty years ago, while preparing a course on the frontier in literature, I first began to research the horsemen of the Americas. At that time, there were available only the numerous classic studies of the American cowboy, those by Dobie, Hough, Folsom, Abbott, Adams, Branch, Frantz and Choate, Santee, to name a few, but on the charro (vaquero), the llanero, the gaucho, or the huaso (guaso), very

will find as enjoyable as the text itself. For the researcher, there is a bibliographical essay and an extensive list of references for each country arranged according to historical and literary sources. It is an excellent starting point for any future studies in the field.

In short, this book makes for enjoyable reading. Slatta offered me a pleasant ride down familiar trails, a welcome look at some new ones, and the titillating suggestion of trails yet to be explored. I have no doubt that *Cowboys of the Americas* will become fundamental reading for all who are interested in continuing research on the New World's most inspiring heroes, the horsemen.

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