

BOOK REVIEW

Sebastián Gil-Riaño, *The Remnants of Race Science: UNESCO and Economic Development in the Global South*

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The Remnants of Race Science is an important contribution to scholarship about the shifting concept of human races in twentieth-century science. The book's introduction provides a compelling argument for the post-war persistence of race science as a social science, in contrast to an already thriving literature on race science that focuses primarily on post-war biological sciences. Within that literature (see especially the work of Jenny Bangham and Jenny Reardon), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has mainly been analysed in terms of its anti-racist public education campaigns, often contrasted with the World Health Organization (WHO) as an actual coordinator of scientific activities that maintained racial research in biomedicine. Gil-Riaño productively draws our attention back to UNESCO, not only as a source of public statements and educational pamphlets on race, but also as organizer and funder of social science and ethnographic research among racialized communities deemed to be economically backward.

Although many anthropologists and sociologists who worked with UNESCO's Social Sciences Department rejected race as an immutable biological category, their research supporting UN economic development projects in Latin America 'contained active remnants of race science and eugenic discourse' (p. 24). This apparent contradiction, Gil-Riaño contends, makes more sense if we recognize the extent to which UNESCO social scientists were influenced by beliefs about racial mixing and acculturation drawn from the colonial and postcolonial experiences of Latin America. The geographic scope of the book is more limited than the title and marketing copy imply: initial invocations of a nebulous 'global South' quickly give way to 'southern hemisphere', a more restrictive geography that excludes regions of Asia and Africa often considered part of the former category. In fact, Gil-Riaño's research is mainly about Brazil, with secondary case studies involving Peru and Polynesia.

The character linking the book together is Alfred Métraux (1902–63), a Swiss anthropologist and UNESCO official whose career trajectory and archival materials frame the introduction and conclusion and weave through most of the chapters. Gil-Riaño convincingly demonstrates that Métraux, despite his European background and education, developed a unique perspective on racial difference through his long residence in Argentina, extensive ethnographic research on South American indigenous peoples, and interactions with Māori anthropologist Te Rangī Hīroa. This character focus is briefly obfuscated in Chapter 1, which exhaustively describes the career trajectories and racial thought of two physicians from Bahia, Nina Rodrigues and Arthur Ramos. The intellectual biography of Ramos is justified by his three-month stint as director of UNESCO's Social Sciences

Department, during which he organized (but did not live to see) the 1949 meeting of scholars that generated the 1950 UNESCO Statement on Race. While this chapter's highly detailed content is well researched, it could have been shortened to improve the pacing toward the book's major arguments.

Chapter 2 catalogues the career highlights of most of the attendees of the 1949 meeting (Ernest Beaglehole, Morris Ginsberg, Claude Lévi-Strauss, Ashley Montagu, E. Franklin Frazier, Juan Comas and Luiz Aguiar Costa-Pinto) to show how their particular interpretations of racialized processes of social change influenced their contributions to the 1950 statement. The only member of the statement-drafting committee whose career and ideas are not discussed in the chapter is Humayun Kabir from India. Given recent work concerning race science in India in this period by Projit Mukharji, and regarding Kabir's involvement in sending Indian archaeologists to Nubia by William Carruthers, this unexplained omission seems like a missed opportunity to draw connections between race concepts from the 'southern hemisphere' across the broader 'global South'.

In Chapter 3 the book begins to come into its own. The narrative becomes more engaging, drawing on Métraux's archived correspondence from his time working alongside Te Rangi Hiroa in Hawaii during the 1930s, demonstrating how the latter influenced Métraux's thinking about methodology. Namely, Métraux began to embrace the integration of physical (anthropometric) research with social and cultural studies of Polynesians to address questions concerning racial capacity to adapt to industrial modernity. Accordingly, after joining UNESCO in the 1940s, Métraux encouraged studies in both physical and social/cultural anthropology to be undertaken by one of the agency's first projects for internationally collaborative social science, the International Institute of the Hylean Amazon (IIHA).

Chapter 4 documents Métraux's efforts to organize cooperative teams of physical and cultural anthropologists to measure the physiology and health of indigenous peoples as well as their cultural practices, deemed equally relevant for the successful economic development of the Amazon region. Gil-Riaño shows that the IIHA social surveys were significantly influenced by the Brazilian ideology of lusotropicalism, promoting racial mixture and cultural adaptation as the solution to 'modernizing' the Amazon.

Chapter 5 examines a UN project to relocate Aymara people from Peru's Andean highlands to a lowland valley during the 1950s. Métraux supported the project, but was challenged by Peruvian physician Carlos Monge Medrano, an advocate of *indigenista* ideologies that considered the Aymara irrevocably adapted to high altitudes and doomed to perish if rapidly transferred to a different climate. Gil-Riaño thus emphasizes that 'southern hemisphere' racial thought was not monolithic; the Monge-Métraux debates 'not only elude the Latin race science framework but also frustrate "north-south" binaries' (p. 231).

In Part 3, Gil-Riaño shifts away from economic-development discourses to analyse international attempts to create a social-scientific field of 'race relations'. Chapter 6 traces UNESCO's studies of race relations in Brazil, where results from different parts of the country troubled prevailing assumptions that Brazil was a harmonious society free of racial prejudice. Chapter 7 meticulously recounts a 1954 conference on Race Relations in World Perspective held in Honolulu and Métraux's unsuccessful attempt to support the creation of an International Society for the Scientific Study of Race Relations. Both chapters show how social scientists outside the United States began to forcefully challenge US-centric assumptions about the nature of racial prejudice.

Overall, Gil-Riaño has produced a solid piece of scholarship that will interest researchers in many disciplines and raise compelling questions for historians of human sciences, Cold War international organizations and Latin America.