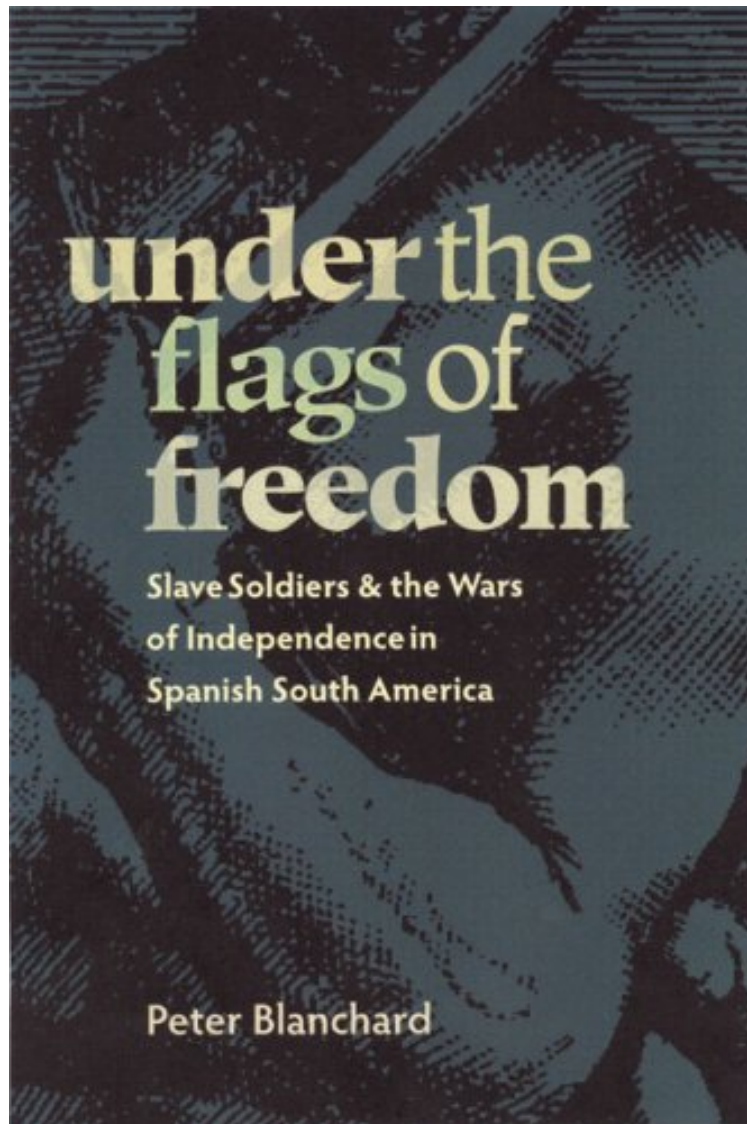


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Under the Flags of Freedom: Slave Soldiers and the Wars of Independence in Spanish South America (Pitt Latin American Series)

Peter Blanchard

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Peter Blanchard : Under the Flags of Freedom: Slave Soldiers and the Wars of Independence in Spanish South America (Pitt Latin American Series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Under the Flags of Freedom: Slave Soldiers and the Wars of Independence in Spanish South

America (Pitt Latin American Series):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An incomplete first look at the subject...By Cesar MaureraAs soon as I received this book I was eager to read it, however I was disappointed on the general tone of the book and how it misses very important chapters in the role of slaves, blacks and pardos in the fight for independence in Hispanic South America. The biggest example of this is failure to describe the events that took place in Venezuela during 1814 when there was an outright racial war as is described in books such as J. Usler Pietri's *Historia de la Rebelion Popular de 1814* or *Cesarismo Democratico* (Vallenilla-Lanz) which don't even appear in the Bibliography. That means that he tells a story where the black and pardo "proceres" are barely mentioned. Effectively he sticks to the traditional story where Bolivar and the other "mantuano" proceres are front and center of the story as opposed to the idea that the independence struggle was a collective achievement. That is painfully obvious in page 120 when deals with former slaves who became officers and he only mentions Pedro Camejo, forgetting people like Juan Jose Rondon, Leonardo Infante to name just two and on the King's side people like Alejo Mirabal who caused terror among Patriots. That doesn't mean everything is bad. The author makes a valuable contribution by illustrating multiple examples of the life of regular slaves/soldiers and not only males, but also the life of enslaved women during the war of Independence. In other words there is legitimate research in the book, it's an important first look at a very complex and forgotten subject.

During the wars for independence in Spanish South America (1808-1826), thousands of slaves enlisted under the promise of personal freedom and, in some cases, freedom for other family members. Blacks were recruited by opposing sides in these conflicts and their loyalties rested with whomever they believed would emerge victorious. The prospect of freedom was worth risking one's life for, and wars against Spain presented unprecedented opportunities to attain it. Much hedging over the slavery issue continued, however, even after the patriots came to power. The prospect of abolition threatened existing political, economic, and social structures, and the new leaders would not encroach upon what were still considered the property rights of powerful slave owners. The patriots attacked the institution of slavery in their rhetoric, yet maintained the status quo in the new nations. It was not until a generation later that slavery would be declared illegal in all of Spain's former mainland colonies. Through extensive archival research, Blanchard assembles an accessible, comprehensive, and broadly based study to investigate this issue from the perspectives of Royalists, patriots, and slaves. He examines the wartime political, ideological, and social dynamics that led to slave recruitment, and the subsequent repercussions in the immediate postindependence era. *Under the Flags of Freedom* sheds new light on the vital contribution of slaves to the wars for Latin American independence, which, up until now, has been largely ignored in the histories and collective memories of these nations.

Under the Flags of Freedom is essential reading for historians of Latin American slavery and independence movements. Peter Blanchard convincingly demonstrates that the Spanish American revolutions undermined slavery in South America; at the same time, war gave enslaved persons the openings to fight for their freedom. Yet despite the new opportunities to claim freedom, the dismantling of slavery was protracted, conflictive, and uncertain. Blanchard brings to light the numerous conflicts over slavery and freedom that shaped the era's broader struggle for emancipation and independence. Christopher Schmidt-Nowara, Fordham University