Clarion Review

Political Science

112 Personajes Celebres
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Four Stars (out of Five)

From Nefertiti to Osama Bin Laden this Spanish-language reference book chronicles the important historical political and cultural figures of this age. *112 Personajes Célebres* is an update of Montaño Durán's *100 Personajes del Milenio* which was published seven years ago. Compiling a reference book of this scope is no small task and the prologue notes that Montaño spent a decade reviewing materials to compose the previous version.

In her author's note Montaño a Bolivian journalist and historian discusses how she added twelve new biographies and updated the entries for a post-9/11 world. The original prologue written by Ra&250;l Peñaranda U. in which he makes several references to the fact that the book catalogs 100 of the millennium's most important figures was not similarly updated.

Each entry is accompanied by a black and white sketch and the author manages to include big moments while also selecting interesting details like the existence of artwork showing Nefertiti eating an entire chicken.

To varying degrees Montaño presents biographical sketches not just of individuals but also of the society culture and countries to which they belong. She is however careful to separate researched facts from the hearsay that sometimes passes for history.

Some entries delve into the socio-political history that their subjects were born into. The entry for T&250;paj Amaru for example includes copious historical notes about why Spain's colonies were ripe for rebellion before focusing on the man himself. Other entries give an overview of that person's family history. For example the entry for Osama Bin Laden spends two paragraphs discussing Bin Laden's father before getting to Bin Laden's birth. And some like the entry for John Lennon which describes him as being an only child begin in traditional encyclopedic fashion. Perhaps because she felt her readership needed it the author spends more than a page of Martin Luther King's entry outlining African American history before discussing

King’s life. This entry ends with long quotes from others about King but contains few of his own words.

The prologue and author’s note speak to the difficulties of choosing just who to include and this may explain why some couples have combined entries. The individual accomplishments of T&250;paj Amaru and Micaela Bastidas John and Jacqueline Kennedy and (the no longer married) Nelson Mandela and Winnie Madikizela are examined in the context of their marriages.

The value of a reference book of this nature cannot be disputed. However better organization could make it much more useful. Entries are not grouped into categories by area of influence or region but chronologically by the date of the subject’s birth. Alphabetizing the names would help readers locate specific entries much faster. Also more of the longer entries could have been divided by subheadings.

Organizational flaws asides the dedication and patience that it took not only to pore over the lives of each of these people but to also give detailed accounts without being tedious is admirable.

Jada Bradley