

The Origins of Mexican National Politics, 1808–1847, appeared to offer the promise of yet another excellent series of new essays on what remains one of the most fascinating and complex periods of Mexican history. It was therefore initially disappointing to find that under a new title, Rodríguez has simply reissued a selection of four chapters which appeared previously in his volume *The Evolution of the Mexican Political System* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1993). Having said that, it was not difficult to overcome this disappointment given the importance of each of the contributions (each without exception, is written by one of that select dozen of inspired and inspiring revisionist scholars in the field) and the fact that *The Evolution of the Mexican Political System* is now, regrettably, out of print.

This volume comprises: Christon I. Archer's essay on the process by which the regular army of New Spain developed during the War of Independence (1810–1821) its subsequent role as an important political force in national politics; Virginia Guedea's essay on the impact the 1812 Cadiz Constitution had in Mexico City (and by default New Spain) by introducing political participation to large sectors of the population; Rodríguez's essay on the compromises, influences, innovations and, in particular, continuities which were encapsulated in the 1824 Federal Constitution, and, finally; Barbara A. Tenenbaum's essay on the means by which the evolution of the economic, military and political structures of the northern provinces/states of the Republic contributed to, rather than opposed, the process of nation-building which was initiated during the first national decades. The claim that this volume offers 'a useful introduction to the politics of early independent Mexico' (p. ix) is perhaps exaggerated; a useful introduction would require a number of more general essays on the Church, the Judiciary, the Constitutions of 1836 and 1843, the role of the army (1821–1847) and the evolution of the economy, in addition to the four aforementioned chapters. It is, nonetheless, true that this paperback edition will provide a larger public with four highly commendable revisionist interpretations of the ways in which the development of the political system of Independent Mexico was deeply influenced and affected by the Bourbon reforms of the late eighteenth century, the increased political role Royalist high-ranking officers were awarded during the War of Independence, the electoral experience which a large percentage of the population was exposed to through the introduction of the Cadiz Constitution in 1812–1813 and 1820, and the pragmatic choices Mexico's emergent political class took in 1824. In brief, this is a welcome reissue of four essays which continue, seven years after they were first presented as papers at a colloquium held at the University of California, Irvine, to demonstrate the complexity of Mexico's political processes and to challenge those more traditional interpretations which unfortunately continue to be reiterated in the historiography.

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Robert H. Jackson (ed.), *Liberals, the Church, and Indian Peasants: Corporate Lands and the Challenge of Reform in Nineteenth-Century Spanish America* (Albuquerque, NM: University of New Mexico Press, 1997), pp. 228, \$47.50 hb.

Despite its subtitle, the temporal reach of this informative book spans a full century or more after Spanish American Independence, with some contributions charting their subject matter, very importantly, into the 1920s. Jackson and his

collaborators examine how two complex corporate entities, the Church and peasant Indian communities, fared under the modernizing wave of liberal rule that came to dominate nineteenth and early twentieth-century Latin American politics. The overall result of a worthy endeavour, as is often the case with edited volumes, is rather uneven, with some contributions providing more stimulating and thoughtful reading than others.

Jackson states that the purpose of the volume is 'to explore the development of liberal anticlerical and anticomunity policy and their practical application' (p. 4). Robert J. Knowlton opens the first of three essays on Mexico with a study of real estate transactions in the Guadalajara region. He invokes big questions – 'did the partition of village lands contribute to the concentration of rural property in the hands of a relatively few private owners, especially during the long Porfirian Age, 1876–1911?' – but restricts himself to such a narrow focus that his concluding remarks seem myopically self-serving: 'Much more research and analysis of data', he sighs, 'will be required to substantiate the standard beliefs' (p. 24). Dawn Fogle Deaton is much more insightful when it comes to interpreting peasant uprisings in Jalisco. There she finds that 'alienation of property does not appear to have contributed to the explosion of peasant rebellion between 1855 and 1864' (p. 58), instead attributing the causes of unrest to 'the combination of war, pestilence, disease, land disputes, racial and ethnic struggles, political instability, and lack of economic and military resources'. In his erudite account of 'Liberal Theory and Peasant Practice', Michael T. Ducey notes that 'popular liberalism' as construed by scholars such as Florencia Mallon and Guy Thomson 'bridges the gap between peasants and liberal ideologues'. He establishes that, in northern Veracruz 'local villagers often delayed the implementation of laws or greatly modified them before allowing the government to privatise their land' (p. 65), noting that 'villages fought back with lawsuits in the courts and sometimes with rifles in the fields' (p. 82). Ducey stresses the role of human agency, observing that 'the view that peasants lived unaware of the political events around them is erroneous' (p. 85), as recent events in Chiapas also suggest.

If issues pertaining to Indian community lands predominate in the three essays on Mexico, Hubert Miller helps redress the book's thematic balance by focusing on liberal moves to strip the Church of property, and authority, in nineteenth-century Guatemala. Miller charts 'the establishment of an adversarial relationship between the two powers', in which 'liberal governments saw the church as an obstacle to progress and the achievement of a modern state'. Especially under the 'radical' stewardship of Justo Rufino Barrios, as opposed to the more 'moderate' tendencies of Miguel García Granados, liberal governments embarked 'on a collision course with the Catholic church and with religious congregations who had substantial corporate holdings and [who] were in charge of education' (p. 104). Jesuit fathers, whose order had only returned to Guatemala in 1851, saw their properties nationalised and sold at public auctions following decrees brought into effect on 24 May 1872; predictably 'some of these holdings ended up in the hands of Barrios's friends', while other assets were used to capitalise the Banco Nacional. Convents and monasteries were turned into secular use as schools, university lecture theatres, hospitals, prisons, post and telegraph offices, and lunatic asylums.

The move south from Mesoamerica to the Andes furnishes three further contributions, two on Bolivia and one on Peru. Nils Jacobsen's essay on Peru is

perhaps the strongest in the collection, a meticulous, fine-grained, regionally sensitive yet elaborately contextualised reconstruction of how 'the strength and role of liberalism in the transformation of Andean peasant communities ultimately depended on local constellations of power, social structure, and the specific mechanisms by which communities were integrated into broader economic circuits'. Jacobsen finds no evidence of 'liberal anticommunity campaigns by the Peruvian central government comparable in strength and duration to those waged in Mexico during the Reforma and the Porfiriato, in Guatemala since the presidency of Rufino Barrios (1872–1885), and in Bolivia between the rule of Mariano Melgarejo (1864–1871) and Bautista Saavedra (1920–1925)' (pp. 123–4). What he does find, contrary to José Carlos Mariátegui's assertion that liberal ideas were utterly shunned by Indian communities, is 'a complex pattern of purposeful, piecemeal adoption and partial rejection' (pp. 155–6). Erick D. Langer and Robert H. Jackson are as nuanced in their approach to 'Liberalism and the Land Question in Bolivia' as Jacobsen is in relation to Peru, linking differences in the 'apparent contradictions in liberal ideology' that led to variable experiences and outcomes to the fact that 'the communities were much more powerful during the nineteenth century than the Catholic church (p. 187). Jackson goes on to highlight the patterns of coexistence between haciendas and Indian communities in the Arque and Vacas regions of highland Bolivia before bringing matters to a tidy end in a compact Conclusion.

While the book has its strengths, it also has some flaws. If a book's title is somehow meant to reflect its textual content, then this one might best be renamed *Indian Peasants, Liberals, and the Church*, for such a reconfiguration more properly fits the balance of the information that the reader is exposed to. A minor quibble, for sure, but I think a valid one. More serious is the near total absence of basic maps, let alone creative cartography. An interested reader unfamiliar with the lay of the land, particularly at the local or regional level of analysis, is deprived of even rudimentary orientation and so will be hard pressed to imagine how, geographically, the history of corporate dispossession unfolds from one very distinct part of Spanish America to the next. Finally, there is the eternal matter of how to put well into words, or at least to try to breathe a bit more life into dry, tired, at times frankly uninspired 'academic' prose. Given the enormous narrative drama of the subject matter, it seems a pity not to be able to read about it in a more animated, engaged style of writing.

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Malcolm Deas, *Vida y Opiniones de Mr. William Wills*, vols. I and II (Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia: Banco de la República, 1996), pp. 315–579, pb

Mr. Wills is a glaring exemplification of the truth of the saying of the Right Hon. George Canning, viz., that an Englishman residing abroad ought to return to his native country every five or six years in order to shake off the un-English notions sure to be imbibed by a protracted residence abroad. Mr. Wills has been six times five years here without once returning to England, and we see the consequences of it. (p. 261)

(Philip Griffith to Lord Woodhouse, 1861)

William Wills arrived in Colombia in 1826 at the age of twenty-one. He remained there for the duration of his long life, dying in the small town of Serrezuela in