

and deferrals to authenticity. At times one gets the impression that this is a story solely of loss, of the demise of the local in the face of homogenizing forces of the state, a troubling analytical framework that replicates old anthropological paradigms of tradition and modernity. However, other than the occasional slippage, the authors do a remarkably good job of complicating the picture, maintaining an awareness of the historical processes themselves rather than becoming mired in a doomed quest for authenticity and stasis. The victims are anything but passive and the processes themselves are anything but foregone conclusions. Moreover, the contributors to *Procesos rurales e historia regional* avoid overemphasizing cultural conceptions of space and time; while these certainly garner attention, a number of essays pay attention to the social component in spatial formations, to the ways in which space and time are structured in terms of class relations as well as ethnic ones, underlining the dynamic and reciprocal constitution of class, culture, and place. An essay by Alberto J. Olvera, for example, shows how the process of accelerated development in Poza Rica, spurred by the growth of the oil industry, created an isolated community where rural and urban workers came together and formed new modes of working-class organization to defend their interests. Similarly, Emilia Velázquez discerns the ways in which commercialization and marketing systems around Papantla functioned to constitute an integrated region.

The "region" is a social construction at base, a product of multiple and often conflicting processes. Too often, the region can end up as either a reification or the province of elites and their inscriptions. However, when done well, regional history can reveal geography and history in the making. Through empirical analysis and attention to a wide variety of rural processes, the authors in this collection provide a dynamic, complex, and rich regional history, painting a fluid portrait of the various ways people have made their own history and geography in northern Veracruz.

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*Las rasgaduras de la descolonización: españoles y mexicanos a mediados del siglo XIX.*

By ROMANA FALCÓN. Mexico City: Centro de Estudios Históricos, El Colegio de México, 1996. Plates. Notes. Bibliography. Index. 368 pp. Paper.

In this book Romana Falcón recounts the fascinating and little-known story of the responses of official Spain and of individual Spaniards toward independent Mexico from the late 1840s to the fall of Maximilian's monarchy in 1867, or roughly during the reign of Isabel II of Spain. Attitudes of lingering imperialism and racial superiority were dominant; Spaniards dismissed Mexicans as barbarians unfit for self-government and as wanting only the restoration of Spanish colonial domination and Hispanic civilization to enjoy the benefits of political and social stability. They were backed up by decades of denunciation of Mexican lawlessness and savagery by Spanish consular agents and Spanish merchants and hacendados alike. Bankrupt and devastated by civil war, Mexican governments could neither protect Spanish subjects living in Mexico nor enforce Mex-

ican laws, giving rise to countless grievances on the part of Spain. It is a tragic tale of self-delusion and eurocentrism, and even if Falcón did not allow her Mexican loyalties to appear occasionally, the reader would still see the Mexicans as the victims in this unequal contest. In the final outcome, of course, the forces of European intervention and racism were defeated by the long-suffering Mexicans under Benito Juárez, in what must be one of Latin American history's most satisfying morality plays.

Falcón recounts this drama with precision and considerable sensitivity. The main focus in the early part of the work is the Mexican lawlessness that affected Spanish owners of plantations and sugar mills, especially in Guerrero and Morelos, as well as the unpaid Mexican debt owed to Spanish interests. No actual summary of the amount of the debt is provided. This is followed by a substantial treatment of Spain's role in the transportation of Mayan Indian laborers from Yucatán to Cuba in the wake of the outbreak of the Caste War in 1847. Here, Yucatecan and Mexican elite interests are assigned much of the blame for one of the most extreme human rights violations of the nineteenth century, but again, Spanish disdain for indigenous cultures played a major role. The mutual recriminations and grievances culminated in the tripartite European intervention of 1861, followed by Spain's withdrawal under General Juan Prim in early 1862 in view of the French imperialistic objectives that had by then materialized. Spain was left to pursue a very troubled neutrality in response to the French invasion and imposition of Maximilian as emperor. At that point, the Spanish liberals were again on the rise at home and began to recognize, at long last, some of the justice of Mexico's resistance to foreign conquest, although Spanish conservatives remained unrepentant. The final chapters thus achieve high drama.

Much of the material comes from Spanish diplomatic and political archives, as well as Spanish and Mexican periodicals of the day. Although modern secondary works are sometimes cited, Falcón could have made better use of existing literature on Spanish involvement in early independent Mexico and on the debt question. Throughout the book, one wishes for more concrete numerical data, particularly on economic and demographic issues. How many Spanish citizens lived in Mexico, how did the numbers fluctuate, what was the total debt they claimed from Mexicans? In the first half of the book the chronology is not always clear and there is a lot of retracing of steps.

None of these complaints lessens the significance of the insights this book provides on the cultural and political divisions tearing apart the Hispanic world in the mid-nineteenth century. There was much greater and more constant tension than previously noted in the historiography. It is clear Spain had not yet come to grips with the loss of empire. At the same time, there is perhaps no other book that reveals quite so powerfully why Mexicans so disliked and feared Spain and Spaniards in the decades after independence.

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