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REVIEW ARTICLE

RECENT WORK IN MEXICAN HISTORY

Popular piety and political identity in Mexico's Cristero rebellion: Michoacán, 1927–1929. By Matthew Butler. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Pp. xx + 251. ISBN 0-19-726298-8. £40.00.

The king's living image: the culture and politics of viceregal power in colonial Mexico. By Alejandro Cañeque. London: Routledge, 2004. Pp. xii + 403. ISBN 0415944449. £60.00.

The spirit of Hidalgo: the Mexican Revolution in Coahuila. By Suzanne B. Pasztor. Calgary and East Lancing: University of Calgary Press and Michigan State University Press, 2002. Pp. xvi + 224. ISBN 0870136267. $49.95.

Changing national identities at the frontier: Texas and New Mexico, 1800–1850. By Andrés Reséndez. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005. Pp. xiii + 309. ISBN 0-521-83555-8. £45.00.

Deference and defiance in Monterrey: workers, paternalism and revolution in Mexico, 1890–1950. By Michael Snodgrass. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Pp. xii + 321. ISBN 0-521-81189-9. £40.00.

Juan Soldado: rapist, murderer, martyr, saint. By Paul J. Vanderwood. NC: Duke University Press, 2004. Pp. xvi + 332. ISBN 0-8223-3404-6. $84.95.

The examination of identities and beliefs, and the affiliations that stem from them, forms the central focus of several of these recent studies. Current historical literature argues that local societies and identities influenced nation- and state-formation both in Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, which was not simply an elite imposition from the centre. Accordingly, regionalism remains very much on the agenda, as it has been in the historiography of the past three or four decades. Most historians of Mexico now concur with the view that a process of negotiation took place between popular groups, provincial elites, and national governments, irrespective of regime, throughout much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in order to make government viable. Historians have also noted that traditional perceptions and old habits derived from the colonial era survived alongside nineteenth-century liberal or early twentieth-century revolutionary innovations.

A substantial number of recent works examine problems of ethnicity, defence of community, and religious beliefs, and thereby deepen our understanding of the differing regional and local dimensions of these phenomena. This has also been the case with regard to the historiography of the struggles for Independence.[1] Differing regional and popular concepts of the nation have emerged from recent literature, and some historians have

[1] Juan Ortiz Escamilla, *Guerra y gobierno: los pueblos y la independencia de México* (Mexico City and Seville, 1997); Eric Van Young, *The other rebellion: popular violence, ideology, and the Mexican struggle for independence, 1810–1821* (Stanford, CA, 2001): for a critical appraisal of this work, see my review in *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 34 (2002), pp. 962–5; José Antonio Serrano Ortega, *Jerarquía territorial y transición política* (Zamora and Mexico City, 2001).

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argued that popular pressure from below and from the regions and localities helped shape institutions and political practices. Discussion continues, however, concerning the degree of peasant awareness of national issues and the scale of participation in national conflicts, particularly with regard to indigenous communities.[2] Recent advances in our understanding of popular Liberalism, strong in specific localities, have altered perspectives on mid- and later nineteenth-century struggles.[3] Regional studies of the revolutionary era, with their strengths and limitations, continue to thrive. Perhaps the most marked tendency at present is towards the examination of popular beliefs, identities, and affiliations. This accounts for the appearance of studies focusing on religious beliefs and practices beyond the context of the Catholic orthodoxy defined by the clergy.

As part of the Spanish Empire from *c.* 1500 to the 1820s, Mexico's history was closely connected to Spanish and European history. A transcontinental Hispanic monarchy, which had survived for 300 years, broke apart in the 1810s and early 1820s, leaving all the component territories, including Spain itself, in turmoil.[4] The viceroyalty of New Spain (1535–1821) would become the forerunner of a Mexican sovereign state, constituted between 1821 and 1824. This independent American state belonged more properly to a North American than to a European context.

Historians have strangely ignored the political history of colonial New Spain. When I began research in the Archive of the Indies in Seville in 1965, the emphasis in the historiography had turned towards social and economic issues. In 1964, for instance, Charles Gibson published his study of Indian society after the Conquest, which opened the way to further examination of peasantry and ethnicity. Although political questions were by no means absent in the ensuing historical literature, commercial networks and the silver mining industry formed the principal subject of work by D. A. Brading, Peter Bakewell, and myself, whilst the focus of the first books by William B. Taylor and Eric Van Young was on, respectively, the Oaxaca Indian peasantry, and the relationship between estate, market, and peasant community in the Guadalajara region. In the historiography of the 1970s and 1980s, Jonathan Israel's examination of political conflict in the viceroyalty, in which tensions between Spanish *peninsulares* and Spanish Americans (creoles) formed a central part of the thesis, was in some respects an exception.[5]

[2] Peter Guardino, *The time of liberty: popular political culture in Oaxaca, 1750–1850* (Durham, NC, and London, 2005), cuts across the Independence decade and examines comparatively the political behaviour of the Indian Villa Alta district in the northern sierra and the creole-mestizo city of Oaxaca in the central valley. See my review of this work, which has a superimposed neo-Gramscian ideology, in *Historia Mexicana*, LVII (2007). Guy P. C. Thomson, '"*Montaña*" and "*Llanura*" in the politics of central Mexico: the case of Puebla, 1820–1920', in Wil Pansters and Arij Ouweneel, eds., *Region, state and capitalism in Mexico: nineteenth and twentieth centuries* (Amsterdam, 1989), pp. 59–78, provides a methodological background.

[3] Guy P. C. Thomson and David G. LaFrance, *Patriotism, politics, and popular liberalism in nineteenth-century Mexico: Juan Francisco Lucas and the Puebla Sierra* (Wilmington, DE, 1999); see also the seminal article by Thomson, 'Popular aspects of liberalism in Mexico, 1848–1888', *Bulletin of Latin American Research*, 10 (1991), pp. 265–92.

[4] Jaime E. Rodríguez has drawn attention to this curiously neglected aspect of Hispanic history in the final remarks in his *The independence of Spanish America* (Cambridge, 1998), pp. 244–5.

[5] Charles Gibson, *The Aztecs under Spanish rule: a history of the Indians of the valley of Mexico, 1519–1810* (Stanford, CA, 1964). This work laid the foundations for James Lockhart, *The Nahuas after conquest: a social and cultural history of the Indians of central Mexico, sixteenth through eighteenth centuries* (Stanford, CA, 1992); D. A. Brading, *Merchants and miners in Bourbon Mexico, 1763–1810* (Cambridge, 1971); Brian R. Hamnett, *Politics and trade in southern Mexico, 1750–1821* (Cambridge, 1971); P. J. Bakewell, *Silver mining and*

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Eschewing both the social and economic perspective and crude polarities between Spaniards and colonials, Alejandro Cañeque's *The king's living image* offers a fresh interpretation of the beliefs and practices underlying viceregal politics. As central points of his thesis, he identifies imagery and ritual as the means of projecting and maintaining Spanish rule in Mexico, once the Conquest was over in the central core zones. This viewpoint leads the author to criticize theories of the 'rise of the modern state' or a 'state-forming' interpretation of colonial history, consistently arguing that this paradigm fails to explain the real nature of Spanish imperial rule. At the time when the 'modern state' was supposed to be emerging in Europe, Cañeque, in fact, questions whether a 'state' existed at all in Spanish America in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. He refuses to give primacy to the idea of the 'state' and rejects the view that the absolute monarchy (defined in Hispanic periodization from c. 1480 to 1808) took the forefront in its development.[6]

Reference to current European historical issues gives this work distinction. In particular, Cañeque connects his research to debates among early modern Europeanists concerning the strengths and weaknesses of absolutism. He stresses, for example, the continuing importance of seventeenth-century viceregal patronage, which co-opted a range of interests into the network of power. The ambiguities of 'state' power whether royal or viceregal, when looking, for example, at the Inquisition in New Spain, functioning between 1571 and 1813, become evident. Cañeque rightly poses the question of whether the Inquisition was a royal or papal institution or *sui generis*. He goes into this subject in detail, pointing out that the Council of the Inquisition, part of the Habsburg conciliar system of government, refused subordination to the Council of the Indies in Madrid and to the Audiencia of Mexico, the viceroy's principal consultative committee and New Spain's supreme judicial body. Viceroys and prelates frequently complained of an unbridled Holy Office and the Crown seemed unable or unwilling to bring it under control. Accordingly, the Inquisition could hardly be viewed as a reinforcement of viceregal authority.[7]

Cañeque does not see the Spanish monarchy, at least under the Habsburgs (1519–1700), in the vanguard of the modern state. As is well known, Spain and the Empire consisted of an association of kingdoms and territories brought together by their common sovereigns. Within this universal monarchy, each component retained its own institutions and practices. Furthermore, he argues that many older rights and customs survived alongside

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society in colonial Mexico, Zacatecas, 1546–1700 (Cambridge, 1971); Jonathan I. Israel, *Race, class and politics in colonial Mexico, 1610–1670* (Oxford, 1975); William B. Taylor, *Landlord and peasant in colonial Oaxaca* (Stanford, CA, 1972). Eric Van Young, *Hacienda and market in eighteenth-century Mexico: the rural economy of the Guadalajara region, 1675–1820* (Berkeley, CA, 1981), examined the development of the hacienda as market-oriented business with considerable impact on neighbouring Indian village communities in the cereal-producing zones in the vicinity of the rising city of Guadalajara. Carlos Sempat Assadourian, *El sistema de la economía colonial: el mercado interior: regiones y espacio económico* (Mexico City, 1983), emphasized the internal economy during the colonial period, complement and alternative (especially during times of wartime blockade) to the Atlantic trade.

[6] This work should be seen in relation to Serge Gruzinski, *La colonisation de l'imaginaire: sociétés indigènes et occidentalisation dans le Mexique espagnole, XVIe–XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1988), which examines the incorporation of indigenous society into the Hispanic cultural world through the transformation of its historical and mythical past ('memory'), the diffusion of Christian spirituality, and the supersession of a pictorial by a literary means of communication ('occidentalization'). For the changing basis of Spanish rule under the Bourbons, see, for instance, Colin MacLachlan, *Spain's empire in the New World: the role of ideas in institutional and social change* (Berkeley, CA, 1988).

[7] See, for instance, the historiographical review by Munro Price, 'Versailles revisited: new work on the Old Regime', *Historical Journal*, 46 (2003), pp. 437–47.

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the monarchy's institutions and functions. As recent literature has shown, this proved to be the case even within the kingdom of Castile, traditionally regarded as the component unit in which royal power was strongest. The Cortes of Castile not only continued to meet until Charles II's accession in 1665, but also exerted considerable pressure on the government regarding the voting of taxes.

Ritual and symbolism certainly impressed their witnesses, as Cañeque is correct to stress. Catholic orthodoxy lay at the heart of the system in the Habsburg era and Cañeque identifies the Eucharist as the most powerful of such symbols. Portrayed in the form of a sun, the Habsburg monarchy employed the Eucharist as a political instrument to bind the Hispanic monarchy together. Joining heaven and earth, the Eucharist remained the focal point of a Catholic vision of the universe. Its political use provided an effective guarantee of dynastic legitimacy until the eighteenth century. We should not forget, however, that the 'baroque' rituals identified by Cañeque still required a substantial legal and financial base for their efficacy and cannot be understood without that foundation. Although factions, pressure-groups, and interests operated continuously at the viceregal court in Mexico City, Habsburg absolutism, as practised in New Spain, did not have to come to terms with the type of hereditary nobility prevalent in Europe. The legal profession, its apex in the Audiencia, and the mercantile community, its focus in the Consulado of Mexico, the mercantile guild and tribunal, effectively sustained the viceregal political system. Monarchical authority remained firmly grounded in New Spain, despite political conflict between the principal bodies at the viceregal centre.[8]

Independent Mexico, unsuccessfully searching for a new legitimacy, soon faced the menacing expansionism of the United States, which was to result in the loss of half the claimed national territory between 1836 and 1853. Throughout the 1850s, constant pressure followed for further territorial concessions and transit rights. Amongst historians of the United States, Mexico's War with the US from 1846 to 1847 has received little attention, largely because it has been obscured by the Civil War of 1861–5. In Mexico, however, the contrary has been the case. Conferences and seminars during 1997–8, organized to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the War, examined in detail the problem of what went wrong for Mexico in the aftermath of Independence. The successive breakdown of federalism and centralism, constitutionalism and personal rule only served to highlight the failure of the new sovereign state to establish a post-colonial legitimacy, around which consensus could have been built.[9]

[8] Louisa Schell Hoberman, *Mexico's merchant élite, 1590–1660: silver, state and society* (Durham, NC, and London, 1991), penetrates beyond the economic and political position of the commercial elite, heavily involved in financing the mining sector, to individual cases. For the eighteenth century, see Doris M. Ladd, *The Mexican nobility at independence, 1780–1826* (Austin, TX, 1976); John Kicza, *Colonial entrepreneurs: families and business in Bourbon Mexico City* (Albuquerque, NM, 1983); William B. Taylor, *Magistrates of the sacred: priests and parishioners in eighteenth-century Mexico* (Stanford, CA, 1996), for a magnificent analysis of the triangular relationship of civil administrator, priest, and village; Matilde Souto Mantecón, *Mar Abierto: la política y el comercio de Consulado de Veracruz en el ocaso del sistema imperial* (Mexico City, 2001); Guillermina del Valle Pavón (co-ord.), *Mercaderes, comercio y consulados de Nueva España en el siglo XVIII* (Mexico City, 2003); Edith Boorstein Couturier, *The silver king: the remarkable life of the count of Regla in colonial Mexico* (Albuquerque, NM, 2003).

[9] Josefina Z. Vázquez edited and introduced a large volume on the problem of the defeat, *México al tiempo de su guerra con Estados Unidos (1846–1848)* (Mexico City, 1997). Donald Fithian Stevens, *Origins of instability in early republican Mexico* (London, 1991), argues that the conflict between Mexico's colonial inheritance and nineteenth-century liberal goals generated instability. Peter F. Guardino, *Peasants, politics,*

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The history of Mexico, located in the North American sub-continent, differed markedly from that of other Spanish American countries. Texan Independence in 1836 and the annexation of the Texas Republic to the United States in 1845 began the process by which the viceroyalty of New Spain's Far North would become the 'American South-West'. The Mexican defeat in the War of 1846–7, the cession of New Mexico and Upper California in 1848, and the Gadsden Purchase of 1853 completed this process. David J. Weber's earlier analysis of this dramatic transition provides a solid foundation for Andrés Reséndez's *Changing national identities at the frontier*, a fascinating study of shifting identities and interests.[10]

Reséndez's view of the early Mexican state has a resonance with the argument presented by Cañeque with regard to the first two centuries of colonial rule. According to Reséndez, 'Prior to the Texas Revolution and the Mexican-American War, Mexico did not possess a full-fledged state. But it did have bureaucratic systems of patronage that proceeded in earnest with the arduous task of centralizing authority and weaving together disparate frontier social groups' (p. 91). In other words, institutions were less significant than personal loyalties and power networks. Attempts from Mexico City to impose an institutionalized form of centralism through direct taxation and diminution of local autonomy usually ran up against powerful regional sentiment, and they soon floundered.

As Reséndez emphasizes, the Far North did not consist of open or unpopulated territories, awaiting US population and development. The presence of large numbers of unsubdued Indians – 'indios bárbaros' in Mexican terminology – needed serious consideration. These indigenous peoples, grouped as 'nations', remained essentially itinerant rather than sedentary and largely without a written historical tradition.[11] During the eighteenth century, population movement and territorial transposition southward (within the present USA) explained the appearance of warlike and mutually hostile groups on the edges of (in the case of New Mexico), and inside (in the case of Texas), the viceroyalty's Far North. External factors also ensured a 'gradual expansion of the Indian world into Mexico as many indigenous groups, previously isolated and largely dependent on the short supply of powder and old weapons provided by the Spanish Crown, came into contact with French and Anglo-American merchants in the aftermath of the Louisiana Purchase' (pp. 50–1). This situation deteriorated during the nineteenth century and remained a serious problem for the Mexican and US governments until the 1880s.

Spanish and Mexican attempts to hold the Far North might have been flawed or underfinanced, but they were serious, as shown by Hispanic settlement and lasting cultural influence in the Upper Rio Grande Valley. For Reséndez, 'Mexican nationalists moved decisively to weave the Far North into the national fabric by building on pre-existing imperial bureaucracies, promoting new civic and religious rituals, and generally forging an impressive and overlapping patronage network that included the civil administration and the military and Church apparatus' (p. 4). This statement raises the question of the relationship between Mexican nationalism and regionalism, the latter phenomenon being pivotal to Reséndez's argument. It would be interesting, however, to learn more about

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and the formation of Mexico's national state. Guerrero, 1800–1857 (Stanford, CA, 1996), argues that peasant communities influenced national state-formation, and were ready to make 'cross-class alliances'.

[10] David J. Weber, *The Mexican frontier, 1821–1846: the American southwest under Mexican rule* (Albuquerque, NM, 1982).

[11] See Víctor Orozco, *Las guerras indias en la historia de Chihuahua: primera fase* (Mexico City, 1992); and Martha Rodríguez, *La guerra entre bárbaros y civilizados: el exterminio del nómada en Coahuila, 1840–1880* (Saltillo, 1998).

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these 'Mexican nationalists' and how they saw the national project, and in what way their visions of the north differed from those of their viceregal predecessors.[12]

In Reséndez's argument, the pull of the US economy from c. 1820 draws the Mexican Far North eastward away from its hitherto southward orientation towards central Mexico. The gradual integration of western Texas, with increasing Anglo-American and slave settlement, into the cotton economy of Louisiana and towards the commercial metropolis of New Orleans provides the most graphic illustration of this process. The Mexican Federal Constitution of 1824, unlike the US Constitution of 1787, prohibited slavery. The Texas crisis of 1835–6 sprang from Mexican events such as the collapse of the first Federal Republic. Texan defence of the Constitution, a regionalist position shared across the Mexican Republic, exposed perilous ambiguities concerning the slavery question. Reséndez is careful to place Texan political conflicts within the context of those of the state of Coahuila-Texas, established in 1824–5. From this complex background, an Anglo-American-dominated separatist movement ultimately prevailed in Texas.

The creation of a new border on the Rio Grande in 1848 soon opened fresh possibilities for development across northern Mexico. The US Civil War, which led to the second secession of Texas, this time from the USA, further stimulated commerce along the border, especially after the Northern blockade of Southern ports. The two Mexican north-eastern states of Nuevo León and Coahuila (after the restoration of the federal Constitution in 1846) and the border strip of Tamaulipas were the first to benefit. A series of works by the Monterrey-based historian, Mario Cerruti, has examined the economic origins of this early development of the north-east and its social consequences in terms of elite-formation and urbanization. The development of the railways after 1880 deepened an already flourishing economic linkage to the United States and facilitated the greater territorial integration of Mexico. Railways contributed to a range of activities from cotton production in south-western Coahuila to coal-mining at Piedras Negras on the Rio Grande and brewing, glass-manufacture, and steel in Monterrey.[13]

Two recent studies deal with the course and consequences of the Mexican Revolution from 1910 in the two different regional contexts of Coahuila and Nuevo León in the north. Suzanne Pasztor's *The spirit of Hidalgo* argues that alterations to the Federal Constitution of 1917 with the object of privatization during the 1990s and the election of Vicente Fox (from a party critical of the Revolution's legacy) to the presidency in 2000 make a reassessment of the Díaz regime (1884–1911) and revolutionary era pertinent. Pasztor reminds us that the border-state of Coahuila was the place of origin of both the Madero and Carranza families,

[12] The debate has usually been framed, particularly with reference to the first half of the nineteenth century, in terms of the tension between the federal government and the state governments in the regions, rather than as a conflict between nationalism and regionalism. During the period of the Liberal Reform and the French Intervention (1855–67), the tension between regional and national interests became sharper. Some current historiography has preferred to stress defence of ethnic identity in relation to both the national state and regional governments. See Antonio Escobar Ohmstede, ed., *Indio, nación y comunidad en el México del siglo xix* (Mexico City, 1993); and Antonio Escobar Ohmstede, Romana Falcón, and Raymond Buve, eds., *Pueblos, comunidades y municipios frente a los proyectos modernizadores en América Latina, siglo xix* (San Luis Potosí and Amsterdam, 2002).

[13] See, for instance, Mario Cerutti, *Economía de guerra y poder regional en el siglo xix* (Monterrey, 1983); idem, 'The formation and consolidation of a regional bourgeoisie in northeastern Mexico (Monterrey: from reform to revolution)', in Pansters and Ouweneel, eds., *Region, state and capitalism*, pp. 47–58; Sandra Kuntz Ficker, *Empresa extranjera y el mercado interno: el 'Ferrocarril Central Mexicano', 1880–1907* (Mexico City, 1995).

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landowner businessmen, who provided the leadership in the first two phases of the Revolution during the 1910s. Michael Snodgrass's *Deference and defiance in Monterrey* examines the principal 'missing link' in the historiography of the Mexican Revolution. This is the study of business and labour in Monterrey, the country's leading industrial city and state capital of Nuevo León, frequently overlooked, since it was never a centre of revolutionary activity. Snodgrass rightly seeks an explanation for this.

Coahuila, which had a different colonial history to Nuevo León, shared the experience of landlord dominance with its western neighbour Chihuahua. Pasztor's book highlights the curious lack of studies of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Coahuila. The explanation for the historiography's relative neglect of Coahuila probably lies in the greater attention placed on Chihuahua from the eighteenth century, when population was attracted north-westwards to mining settlements. Historians have understandably sought to explain the rise of the Terrazas and Creel families, with their range of business and landed interests dating from the Liberal Reform era (1855–76) to the Revolution, and the consequences of their dominance of the state of Chihuahua. In Coahuila, the sheep-raising estates of the Sánchez Navarro family grew from the late colonial era and lasted into the mid-nineteenth century. Pasztor draws attention to the vast estates of the Treviño and Naranjo families, which rose with liberalism from the late 1850s. Her comments on political life in the state reflect those made by Reséndez with reference to the Far North in the first half of the century: 'by the late nineteenth century, Coahuila politics was characterized not by formal institutions but by informal arrangements based on kinship and business ties. Political participation was the province of a small group of extended families and economic partners, and by the 1890s three cliques dominated the state's political life' (p. 26).[14]

Pasztor emphasizes the business character of Coahuilan estates, particularly in the cotton zone of La Laguna, where there was a continuous struggle for control of water supply. This zone, which drew some 40,000 migrant workers from central Mexico at harvest time, became a centre of opposition to the Díaz régime and a pole of attraction for radical groups. Economic difficulties in Coahuila after 1900, and especially after the recession of 1907, exacerbated social tensions and worsened relations between the region and the centre of power in Mexico City. Pasztor neatly balances the economic and political factors in her analysis. Coahuila, a federalist stronghold, where defence of municipal autonomy had always been a major issue, became a centre of opposition to the régime. Pasztor also throws light on the issue of the strengths and weaknesses of Díaz's personal rule, still a matter of debate.[15]

The revolution in Coahuila ultimately raised Venustiano Carranza to power at the centre, until his assassination in 1920. This state, unlike those of the centre and south, did

[14] Charles H. Harris, *A Mexican family empire: the latifundio of the Sánchez Navarros, 1765–1867* (Austin, TX, 1975); Mark Wasserman, *Capitalists, caciques, and revolution: the native élite and foreign enterprise in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1854–1911* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1984); idem, *Persistent oligarchies: élites and politics in Chihuahua, Mexico, 1910–1940* (Durham, NC, and London, 1993); Cheryl E. Martin, *Governance and society in colonial Mexico: Chihuahua in the eighteenth century* (Stanford, CA, 1996); Romana Falcón, 'Poderes y razones de las jefaturas políticas: Coahuila en el primer siglo de la vida independiente', in Jaime E. Rodríguez O, ed., *The evolution of the Mexican political system* (Wilmington, DE, 1993).

[15] William K. Meyers, *Forge of progress, crucible of revolt: the origins of the Mexican revolution in La Comarca Lagunera, 1880–1911* (Albuquerque, NM, 1994). See Romana Falcón and Raymond Buve, eds., *Don Porfirio Presidente … nunca omnipotente: hallazgos, reflexiones y debates, 1876–1911* (Mexico, 1998); and Paul Garner, *Porfirio Díaz* (London, 2001), which stressed how the Díaz regime changed significantly over time, and was essentially contradictory.

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not have a large indigenous peasantry attached to communal land and determined to defend ethnic identity. Miners and mobile workers scarcely had any interest in land acquisition. The overthrow of Díaz in 1911 accelerated unionization in Coahuila, especially among the railway workers of Monclova, and stimulated agitation against US managers in the mining sector. Although Carranza sought labour support and, in 1915–17, championed municipal autonomy, his government repressed worker protest and intervened in local elections. During the revolutionary era, neighbouring Chihuahua became a centre of conflict from the beginning and saw the emergence of Pancho Villa, who would control a large part of the state. The struggle between Villa and the *carrancistas* characterized the second phase of the Revolution and led to the former's defeat in 1915. Pasztor's study of Coahuila relates directly to this parallel research on the revolutionary history of the border states.[16]

Latin-American business and industrial-labour history still remain fields ripe for historiographical development, although strides have been made in specific aspects. With regard to the colonial era, Doris Ladd regards the strike of 1766, resulting from employer pressure for the reduction of labour costs in the Real del Monte silver-mining zone, as the first of its kind in the North American sub-continent. Despite the predominance of silver, colonial New Spain and early republican Mexico also had large artisan populations. Cotton production in the cities of Puebla and Guadalajara, village-based crafts, and woollen workshops in Querétaro and in the capital similarly competed with Spanish produce for the home market.[17]

Only those industrial sectors in this 'proto-industrialization', that successfully incorporated technological change, survived into the later nineteenth century. The textile sector managed to do so to a significant degree, though not without difficulties and failures. Mexico's achievement was to be virtually self-sufficient in textiles by 1910. On the whole, however, structural problems and inherited attitudes inhibited a more far-reaching industrialization. Stephen Haber has examined the limitations of Mexican business in terms of productivity and technological adaptation, pointing to deficient entrepreneurial skills and practices dating from the colonial era as prime explanations. Ingrained patrimonialism in Monterrey's industrialists forms a central part in the argument of Snodgrass. This, in fact, helped to explain why Nuevo León, unlike its two westerly neighbours, did not become a revolutionary centre in the 1910s.[18]

[16] Villa, always controversial as a personality and with regard to his position in the Revolution, was recently the subject of a monumental study by Friedrich Katz, *The life and times of Pancho Villa* (Stanford, CA, 1998).

[17] Doris Ladd, *The making of a strike: Mexican silver workers' struggles in Real de Monte, 1766–1775* (London, 1988); Richard J. Salvucci, *Textiles and capitalism in Mexico: an economic history of the obrajes, 1539–1840* (Princeton, NJ, 1987); Guy P. C. Thomson, *Puebla de los Angeles: industry and society in a Mexican city, 1700–1850* (London, 1989); Susan Deans-Smith, *Bureaucrats, planters, and workers: the making of the tobacco monopoly in Bourbon Mexico* (Austin, TX, 1991).

[18] Joe C. Ashby, *Organized labor and the Mexican revolution under Lázaro Cárdenas* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1963), dealt predominantly with workers in the La Laguna cotton sector, textiles, the oil industry, and on the railways, and less so with the manufacturing industries located in Monterrey. Stephen H. Haber, *Industry and underdevelopment: the industrialization of Mexico, 1890–1940* (Stanford, CA, 1989). See also Jonathan C. Brown, *Oil and revolution in Mexico* (Berkeley, CA 1993). Sonia Pérez Toledo, *Los hijos del trabajo: los artesanos de la ciudad de México, 1780–1853* (Mexico City, 1996), explores city labour organization and conflicts in the late colonial and early republican era. Urbanization and labour conditions are themes of the essays in Carlos Illiades and Ariel Rodríguez Kuri, eds., *Ciudad de México: instituciones, actores sociales y conflicto político, 1774–1931* (Zamora and Mexico City, 1996).

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Nuevo León shared with other northern states a powerful resentment at interference from a remote and bureaucratically entangled Mexico City. Snodgrass draws considerably on the regional sentiment of *regiomontanos*, shared by both business and labour. As is well known, the origins of northern regionalism lay in the colonial era, only to be powerfully reinforced during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.[19]

In Monterrey, businesses had adopted a patriarchal position towards the labour force by promoting the formation of vertical unions based on the workplace. The Revolution of 1910–40 made the close association of the new state with organized labour an important issue. From the 1920s to the 1940s, the struggle between local business and the post-revolutionary state for the allegiance of labour intensified. Monterrey's population grew from around 80,000 in 1900 to 350,000 by the 1940s and to over 3 million in the 1990s, making it the country's third largest city. The city had a high level of literacy at 77 per cent in 1930 and an expanding public school system. Snodgrass identifies plenty of labour activity in the city during the 1920s, 1930s, and 1940s. He sees the principal struggle in the city as that between, on the one hand, adherence to the 'white unions' with company social, educational, and leisure provisions and, on the other hand, pressure by the revolutionary regime, especially under Lázaro Cárdenas (1934–40), for national unions linked to the state.

Labour autonomy from the national unions prevailed in Monterrey for much of the revolutionary era. By 1930, as much as 50 per cent of the city's industrial labour force remained in company unions. This was partly explained by Mexican ownership of the principal manufacturing firms, brewing, glassmaking, and steel, since hostility to foreign control could contribute to labour militancy. Regional polarization against interference from Mexico City also remained a powerful factor. Steelworkers, for instance, did not join the national union, closely connected to the state, until 1935. Long-lasting loyalties to 'white unions' helped to explain why the largest anti-government demonstration hitherto seen in Mexico occurred in Monterrey in February 1936, when around 50,000 workers and employers took to the streets.

The border between the USA and Mexico, defined in 1848–53, but in many respects artificial, became less a barrier than a stimulant. Pasztor's comment could apply to all the 'frontier' states, as the rise of Nuevo León clearly demonstrated from the 1850s onwards: 'Never a true dividing line, the border between Coahuila and Texas more often served as a point of connection: it was a meeting place for rebel factions, a safety valve for local residents, and an economic opportunity for all concerned' (p. 112).

In Monterrey, a secular Right, rather than a Catholic Right, emerged. The church had never had a strong base there during the colonial era and had not gained much new ground during its period of concerted recovery in central Mexico after 1870. Catholicism only began to emerge as a political force in the city during the 1930s amidst wider business suspicion of the leftward direction of policy under Cárdenas between 1935 and 1938. Until that time, Monterrey business had been content to play along with the anti-clerical policies of the state's Protestant governor, Aaron Sáenz. By contrast, in Guadalajara, capital of the

[19] For regionalism in Nuevo León, see Juan Mora-Torres, *The making of the Mexican border: the state, capitalism, and society in Nuevo León, 1848–1910* (Austin, TX, 2001), which remarks on the need to relate regional to national history. This relationship is successfully examined in Timothy E. Anna, *Forging Mexico, 1821–1835* (London, 1998), where regional sentiment represented the essential component of Mexican nationhood. Regionalism and separatism were, of course, two completely different phenomena.

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state of Jalisco and Mexico's second largest city, Catholic attempts at unionization played a modest though significant role in competing with the left for labour support.[20]

Catholics in Jalisco and a swathe of states – Aguascalientes, Guanajuato, Michoacán, and Querétaro – across the north-central core of Mexico were prominent in opposing first the anti-clerical provisions of the Federal Constitution of 1917 and, later, government policy from 1924 to 1938. The *Altos de Jalisco*, the north-eastern highlands, became one of the focal points of the *cristero* rebellion of 1926–9 against the anti-clerical measures of President Plutarco Elías Calles (1924–8).[21]

Radical advance in the historiography of the *cristero* rebellion really began with Jean Meyer's University of Paris thesis researched during the mid-1960s. Meyer recovered the rebellion from historiographical marginalization as a reactionary movement incited by landowners and clerics opposed to the Revolution. On the contrary, he argued that the rebels represented a cross-section of their local societies. Furthermore, Meyer distinguished between the *cristeros* in the localities, the urban-based Catholic Right, and the ecclesiastical hierarchy. Meyer also posed the perennial question of what happened to popular movements during the course of the Revolution, clearly regarding the *cristero* rebellion in this light. By the 1990s and 2000s, a number of important studies examined the cultural context and social impact of religious belief in Mexico.[22]

Matthew Butler's *Popular piety and political identity in Mexico's Cristero rebellion* develops from this strong earlier base to develop a complex but lucid analysis of differing responses to revolutionary government policy in three districts of eastern Michoacán. His immediate predecessor on the subject, Jennie Purnell, focusing on different sub-regions in the same state, also dealt with the problem of how collective identities were constructed, although, unlike Butler and Reséndez, she does not have the word, 'identity (-ies)' in her title.[23] Both Purnell and Butler convincingly argue that local history, going back to the Independence and Liberal Reform eras, played a major part in explaining religious affiliation in the late 1920s.[24] Butler, for instance, points out that the southerly district of Zitácuaro, which had been a centre of insurgent activity in the 1810s, Liberal support in the mid-nineteenth

[20] Elisa Cárdenas Ayala, *Le laboratoire démocratique: le Mexique en Révolution (1908–1913)* (Paris, 2001), pp. 229–69, discusses social Catholic organization, with emphasis on Jalisco, and looks critically at the bibliography. See also Manuel Ceballos Ramírez, *El catolicismo social: un tercero en discordia: 'rerum novarum', la 'cuestión social' y la movilización de los católicos mexicanos (1891–1911)* (Mexico City, 1991).

[21] José Díaz and Ramón Rodríguez, El movimiento cristero: sociedad y conflicto en los Altos de Jalisco (Mexico City, 1979).

[22] From the thesis came *La Cristiada* (3 vols., Mexico City and Madrid, 1973–4), two French offshoots, and a concise English version, *The Cristero rebellion: the Mexican people between church and state, 1926–1929* (Cambridge, 1976). For Meyer's study of the Catholic movement against the Liberal Reform and the Revolution, see Jean Meyer, *El sinarquismo ¿un fascismo mexicano?, 1937–1947* (Mexico City, 1979). For Guanajuato, see Pablo Serrano Álvarez, *La batalla del espíritu: el movimiento sinarquista en el Bajío (1933–1951)* (2 vols., Mexico City, 1992), and for relations with the church, V. Rubén Aguilar and P. Guillermo Zermeño, *Religión, política y sociedad: el sinarquismo y la iglesia (nueve ensayos)* (Mexico City, 1992).

[23] Jennie Purnell, *Popular movements and state formation in revolutionary Mexico: the 'Agraristas' and 'Cristeros' of Michoacán* (London, 1999).

[24] D. A. Brading, *Church and state in Bourbon Mexico: the diocese of Michoacán, 1749–1810* (Cambridge, 1994), examines the regional impact of Bourbon policies and clerical division over the issue of Independence from Spain, and Margaret Chowning, *Wealth and power in provincial Mexico: Michoacán from the late colony to the Revolution* (Stanford, CA, 1999), for regional bases of power and their relation to the broader Mexican context.

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century, and then Protestant evangelizing, fuelled a strong anti-clericalism. He argues that 'Protestantism provided peasants with an autonomous religious framework which both complemented the levelling types of official discourse and lent moral density to a new revolutionary conception of community' (p. 137).

Like Meyer, Purnell viewed the *cristero* rebellion as a 'popular movement' drawn from a range of social groups. She differed, however, in stressing that *agraristas*, the beneficiaries of revolutionary agrarian reform, also came from the peasantry. They, too, formed part of the broader 'popular movement' and played a major role in assisting the federal army in combating the *cristeros*. Purnell, then, sees a peasantry divided, although historical conditions and political decisions accounted for which side individuals took in response to the revolutionary state. For her, politics, rather than religion, was the point of division, portraying *agraristas* also as Catholics, responding positively to agrarian reform and willing to accept anti-clericalism through dislike of the clergy's role in education and political life. While it would be correct to say that in the centre-west, the *mestizo* small-holder or *ranchero* predominated over the hacienda and the Indian community, *rancheros* in other regions in other states, such as Guerrero and San Luis Potosí, were prominent revolutionaries rather than *cristeros*. Class or ethnicity, then, did not determine identities and condition actions.[25]

Butler's intention is to restore religion to the forefront of the analysis of Mexican conflicts in the later 1920s. Accordingly, Butler argues that the *cristero* rebellion cannot be understood in terms of political power, property rights, or cultural differences. In his view,

> religion was a multiple variable, not stable but porous and subject to change, and that within the Mexican Church different levels of religious commitment, distinct forms of religious practice and meaning, and diverse religious identities not only existed but constituted a significant part of the social and cultural worlds of ordinary people. (p. 9)

This position corresponds to that of Paul Vanderwood in his earlier study of the Tomochic rebellion of 1891–2 in western Chihuahua. Vanderwood argued that material factors did not explain religious beliefs, which he did not regard as arising from social deprivation or sublimation. Both Vanderwood and Butler regard belief and outlook, rather than social and economic factors, as uppermost in determining which course of action local people took.[26]

A crucial aspect of Butler's discussion is the examination of the extent to which clerical influence and sacramental observance were stronger in some districts than others. In the northern districts of Maravatío and Zinapécuaro, the revival of religion in the aftermath of the Liberal Reform had increased clerical influence and deepened observance of the sacraments and moral precepts. In many respects, the church was able to reclaim society, but there was striking variation from district to district. Meanwhile, Butler sees a growing 'feminization' of religion from the late nineteenth century; as male disregard for the sacramental life contributed to gender divisions, female lay associations expanded their influence by giving women a voice in church institutions. During the period of intense

[25] The term, *mestizo*, has no easy definition. It means far more than simply miscegenation or multiculturalism, since it can also have moral and political implications. Positive usage stresses anti-colonialism or rejection of race-separation, but, as in Mexico, moves beyond that to the ethno-social integration associated with nation-building. For a recent examination from a South American perspective, see Peter Wade, 'Rethinking *mestizaje*: ideology and lived experience', *Journal of Latin American Studies*, 37 (2005), pp. 239–57.

[26] Paul J. Vanderwood, *The power of God against the guns of government: religious upheaval at the turn of the nineteenth century* (Stanford, CA, 1998).

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church–state conflict, when the Mexican hierarchy closed the churches and the revolutionary regime proscribed the priests, the Catholic laity increasingly stepped into the breach by providing the means of keeping the faith alive. In the meantime, Protestant worship continued unimpeded by the state.

Paul Vanderwood's *Juan Soldado* examines a cult which developed among Catholics in the border zones, but outside the confines of the 'official Church'. 'Juan Soldado' – the popular name given to a young soldier, executed for the rape and murder of an eight-year-old girl, who became the object of a religious cult – examines an altogether different manifestation of belief. Juan Castillo Morales was convicted in the Tijuana of 1938 and executed in a technically illegal 'ley fuga' ('shot while trying to escape'). Although this cult received no recognition from the official church, it formed part of a pattern of similar phenomena across northern Mexico and southern parts of the United States with strong Mexican influence. Vanderwood points out that Mexican–US border zones are 'dotted with miracle-working sites, all of them in what were, at the time their devotions originated, tiny outpost communities' (p. 75). These included three in southern Texas, one in Tucson, and the shrine of El Niño Fidencio at Espinal, within striking distance of Monterrey, the industrial city discussed earlier.

Tijuana, a border town fourteen miles from San Diego on the US side, was a centre of gambling, prostitution, and drinking during the US Prohibition, and suffered badly in the Depression. Yet, Tijuana also drew Mexicans even from distant parts of their country, and became, in later decades, a pole of attraction for large-scale internal migration. Even in the 1920s and 1930s, most of the town population came from outside. Castillo Morales, a literate *mestizo* who had enlisted at eighteen, was not a native of Baja California but originated from a village in the Isthmus of Tehuantepec in Oaxaca. Government anti-clerical policies further weakened the local Catholic church, which had generally ignored the region. Protestantism and freemasonry, as a result, had a significant presence there.

Vanderwood explores the process of how a soldier accused of raping and murdering a child became viewed, first as a victim of injustice and a martyr, and finally as an intercessor and saint. Despite the sufferings of the family, local people quickly came to believe that 'Juan Soldado' had been made the scapegoat for more powerful individuals. Many Mexicans identified with an innocent victim, an idea connected powerfully to the Passion of Jesus Christ, whilst others believed that those who died unjustly were closer to God and, therefore, might intercede for suffering people on earth. Pilgrims began to arrive at the grave, and 'Juan Soldado' became the intercessor that could provide for safe passage, legal or illegal, across the border into the United States. The cult, then, was rooted in injustice.[27]

Although popular canonization of 'Juan Soldado' threw into question the church's monopoly over the process (and tendency to canonize chiefly clerics and religious), Vanderwood finds that devotees of this cult were more likely to go to Mass than other Catholics in Tijuana. After interviews and conversations, he argues that 'these devotees are not inflexible religious fanatics, nor do they wallow in superstition and ignorance. They are as modern as the next person on the street, and more creative than many in dealing with their problems' (p. 260).

[27] For comparison with the north-west, see Adrian Bantjes, *As if Jesus walked on earth: Cardenismo, Sonora and the Mexican Revolution* (Wilmington, DE, 2000), and idem, 'Idolatry and iconoclasm in revolutionary Mexico: the dechristianization campaign, 1929–40', *Mexican studies/Estudios Mexicanos*, 16 (2000), pp. 87–120.

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The historical context of the trial and execution of 'Juan Soldado' was the same Cárdenas era which Snodgrass discussed with respect to Monterrey at the opposite geographical pole of northern Mexico. Both in the 1920s and 1930s, government pressure for the unionization of labour and its integration into the revolutionary programme (and after 1929 the revolutionary party) affected Tijuana as well, though on a considerably smaller scale. We are also dealing with the tail end of the religious conflict, which precipitated such violence in the Michoacán studied by Purnell and Butler as well as in other central zones of the centre-west. However, the case of 'Juan Soldado' is radically different from the experience of the *cristeros* in the two districts under clerical influence identified by Butler, because it developed, like its parallels on both sides of the border, beyond the direct sponsorship of the Catholic clergy.

I have set these six review books into a broad historiographical context, accessible to non-specialists in Mexican history, in order to integrate its themes, trends, and preoccupations with those evident in other historical fields. Three different methods appear in the six works discussed: a new approach to political history through attention less to structures and events than to rituals and symbols; a social and economic perspective, which, not forgetting political implications and consequences, focuses primarily on business and labour viewed within the regions; and the examination of 'identities', whether secular (regional and local) or religious, as a mainspring of political action or social behaviour.

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