

death in 1832. He envisioned the region as a utopia where new governments could be created and legislation drawn up according to the only valid principle, the greatest good for the greatest number. Bentham made a serious, but unsuccessful, effort to obtain Spanish permission to emigrate to America in 1808, where he was to serve as legislator of Aaron Burr's chimerical Mexican Empire. He subsequently prepared constitutional codes, laws for education and the press, a proposal for an inter-oceanic canal, and a document in 1820–21 advising Spain to emancipate the colonies. He carried on a lengthy correspondence with Spanish American leaders, notably Bernardino Rivadavia, Simón Bolívar, and José del Valle; and he bombarded them with materials and with advice on the establishment of new institutions.

Williford's narrowly focused, but carefully constructed, monograph is a detailed exposition of this Bentham material, most of it in manuscript in London. The author's presentation of Bentham's ideas is lucid, and the reader emerges with a vivid sense of the pitfalls of the rationalist mentality, the assumption that if laws can be drawn up according to a valid principle, they can be applied universally, without concern for cultural differences. Bentham was ignorant of Spanish America and naïve in his proposals, yet he inspired awe in men like Rivadavia, as Williford demonstrates. Because of inconclusive evidence in Bentham's writings, the author turned away from her original inquiry into Bentham's influence, so that the book becomes a contribution to Bentham studies rather than a larger contribution to the history of ideas in Spanish America. Bentham's great impact on Spanish American liberalism still needs to be explained, but it must be done from American as well as from English evidence.

University of Iowa

CHARLES A. HALE

BACKGROUND

The Basin of Mexico: Ecological Processes in the Evolution of a Civilization. By WILLIAM T. SANDERS, JEFFREY R. PARSONS, and ROBERT S. SANTLEY. New York: Academic Press, 1979. Maps. Illustrations. Tables. Graphs. Bibliography. Index. Pp. xiv, 561. Cloth. \$49.50.

During the last two decades, several ambitious archaeological projects have focused on the Basin of Mexico, especially on the great Middle

Horizon state centered at Teotihuacán. This book summarizes an extensive survey of settlement patterns carried out by the authors and a team of students and assistants between 1960 and 1975. The objective of this survey was to gather information pertinent to ecological and political processes in the Basin between 1000 B.C. and A.D. 1519. Working within the “materialist paradigm” of cultural ecology and anthropology, the survey team focused on the development of agriculture, especially irrigation and terracing, and on the demographic profile of the area over time. This imposing project surveyed 3,500 square kilometers—approximately 75 percent of the agriculturally usable land mass of the Basin—locating an estimated 80 percent of all spatially isolatable communities.

Three introductory chapters, with thorough discussions of research methods and problems, are followed by the substantive core of the book: four chapters on the natural environment, settlement history, demographic history, and resource exploitation of the Basin of Mexico. The richness of the material presented here will make these chapters a benchmark for future studies of the area. Three final chapters address interpretive and theoretical issues and the future of research in the Basin. The authors fashion a model from traditional and much discussed theories to describe and analyze the evolution of ecological control and political systems in the Basin. This model incorporates Boserup’s theory of demography and agricultural intensification and Wittfogel’s theory of hydraulic agriculture and political centralization. The principles of population growth, least effort in subsistence production, and risk management underlie this model. Excavations, comparison to contemporary ethnographic material, and estimates of population carrying capacity are used to complement the survey research in testing the model. Theoretically, as well as substantively, this book will provide grist for some of the most important debates surrounding the demographic, technological, and political processes of the evolution of civilization in Mexico and elsewhere.

College of William & Mary

STEPHEN B. BRUSH

Los hombres de piedra: Escultura olmeca. By BEATRIZ DE LA FUENTE. Mexico City: UNAM, 1977. Illustrations. Notes. Figures. Map. Appendix. Bibliography. Index. Pp. 390.

This is a comprehensive work on the monumental sculpture of the Olmec civilization, Mesoamerica’s first high culture, which spanned the period from 1300 to 400 B.C. It should be read in conjunction with the author’s more fully illustrated *Catálogo de la escultura olmeca* (1973). Here