

final section suggests further study with an annotated list of 19 books, 9 films, and 7 popular-scientific journals. All the readings in this volume are well selected and edited, and the whole collection provides up-to-date review of the complexity of deforestation in the Latin American region.

The volume edited by Steen and Tucker presents 23 research papers divided into sections on keynote addresses, Central America, Mexico, Brazil and Amazonia, and timber extraction and forestry since colonial times. Steen's cursory introduction explains that the conference was sponsored by the Forest History Group of the International Union of Forestry Research Organizations (IUFRO). The common theme of ecosystem change in the tropics ties together articles ranging from general overviews to highly technical papers on, for example, the long-term effects of sheep grazing in semiarid regions or the role of microfossils in historical analysis. Some engaging essays appear, such as Warren Dean's strong plea for the incorporation of environmentalist arguments into Latin American history and Murdo McLeod's critical review of Amerindian and Spanish resource use from the sixteenth to the nineteenth centuries. Nuanced discussions of traditional resource management are presented in Rhena Hoffman's article on Mexico and in William Balée and Leslie Sponsel's chapter on Amazonia. The articles generally are well written, and many provide useful case studies for specific regions or countries.

Available at an accessible price in paperback, these two books are both useful for classroom adoption in courses in anthropology, history, ecology, or Latin American studies.

MARIANNE SCHMINK, University of Florida

*Politics and Social Change in Latin America: Still a Distinct Tradition?* Edited by HOWARD J. WIARDA. 3d Edition. Boulder: Westview Press, 1992. Tables. Notes. Bibliography. xiv, 354 pp. Cloth, \$66.00. Paper, \$19.95.

The 16 essays comprising the expanded third edition of this familiar reader advance the thesis that anyone hoping to fathom Latin America must approach it through study of the region's unique cultural heritage, a heritage bequeathed by Iberian conquistadores bearing the attitudes and values of late medieval Roman Catholic Europe. Chief among the determinants of Latin America's distinct tradition, argue Howard Wiarda and several of his fellow essayists, is the Latin American people's inclination toward sociopolitical arrangements that are hierarchical, corporative, and centrist in character.

Six of the scholars whose essays appear here figure among the foremost proponents of what is often termed the "cultural" interpretation of Latin American civilization. In addition to Wiarda (three essays), they include Richard Morse and Glen Dealy (two essays each), Claudio Veliz, Fredrick Pike, and Charles Anderson. The engaged quality of their writing is suggested in Wiarda's question, posed

in the volume's introduction: "Can it be . . . that the Latin American nations, with their organic, unitary, and patrimonialist conception of the proper ordering of state and society, will in the long run prove to have coped better with the wrenching crisis of modernization than the United States, with its secular, divisive, fragmented interest-group pluralism?" (p. 20). The other six contributors, not so closely associated with the cultural approach, are Charles Wagley, Donald Worcester, Daniel Levine, Lawrence Graham, John Martz and David Myers, and Peter H. Smith.

This volume's strength lies in its frank espousal of the cultural model of Latin American history and politics. Thus it is a useful teaching tool, standing as it does in counterpoise to collections whose essayists perceive the region in terms of the cultural interpretation's two chief competing paradigms: liberal developmentalism and Marxist class analysis. The volume's principal weakness concerns the older essays, of which certain passages have not worn well with time. For example, Fredrick Pike informs us, "it is still not clear whether [Castro's revolution] will set an example or remain an exception" (p. 169). Donald Worcester warns that when Latin America changes, "the transformation will be revolutionary, uncontrollable, and unpredictable" (p. 29). Glen Dealy asserts, "private investment in the area is now and probably will continue to be subject to scorn, outrage, and, given the chance, expropriation" (pp. 52–53).

Passages such as these date otherwise worthy essays, lending them a slightly anachronistic quality. Judicious editing would have addressed the problem. This complaint notwithstanding, Howard Wiarda and Westview Press are to be congratulated for keeping this useful reading collection in print.

JAMES D. HENDERSON, Coastal Carolina University

## Background

*Taricuri's Legacy: The Prehispanic Tarascan State.* By HELEN PERLSTEIN POLLARD. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993. Photographs. Illustrations. Maps. Tables. Figures. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xx, 266 pp. Cloth. \$37.50.

On the eve of Spanish contact, the foremost rival of the central Mexican Aztec Empire was the Tarascan kingdom centered at Tzintzuntzan in the Lake Pátzcuaro basin of Michoacán. By the beginning of the sixteenth century, the Tzintzuntzan polity, founded only centuries earlier by the mythical Taricuri, had come to dominate an estimated 75,000-square-kilometer area (including much of the current state of Michoacán). It shared a military frontier with its Aztec enemy less than 200 kilometers west of the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlán. Yet while the Tarascans were well known to both the Aztecs and their Spanish conquerors, they have received surprisingly little subsequent scholarly attention, and they remain