

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.

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Background

Tarícuri'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 Tarícuri, 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

less understood than many of the other polities and peoples that comprised the Mesoamerican world.

In *Taricuri's Legacy*, Helen Perlstein Pollard, an archaeologist and ethno-historian who has devoted more than two decades to the investigation of ancient Michoacán, draws on documentary as well as archaeological and ecological studies to redress this intellectual gap. Although recent advances clearly have been made, the volume's necessary interpretative reliance on the sixteenth-century *Relación de Michoacán* (narratives of Tarascan noblemen, translated and transcribed by a Franciscan priest) signals that Tarascan research remains at a relatively preliminary stage. In contrast, for example, key recent breakthroughs in Aztec studies have occurred as similar early colonial narratives have been amply supplemented and modified by analyses of more specific legal-land records and by a diverse set of archaeological studies directed at houses, temples, and survey regions. In central Mexico, empirical sources have not always confirmed some aspects of the narrative histories, and one suspects that similar discrepancies may befall portions of the *Relación de Michoacán*.

Well aware of these limitations, Pollard manages to discuss Tarascan history, political organization, economy, religion, settlement patterns, and relations with surrounding peoples in a thoughtful manner that spurs questions of theoretical and comparative importance. She considers the complex historical processes that accounted for a number of similarities between the Tarascans and the rest of Mesoamerica, including the basic calendar system. (The Tarascan language, by contrast, was only remotely related to other indigenous Mesoamerican linguistic groups, and Tarascan temple construction followed a distinctive architectural plan.) Pollard also illustrates how the Tzintzuntzan economy apparently utilized redistributive mechanisms to a greater degree (and relied less on marketing) than did the contemporaneous central Mexican exchange system. She further proposes that while ethnic diversity was integrated into the Aztec political economy and social fabric, active ethnic assimilation was critical to Tarascan expansion and domination.

Each of these issues, as well as others Pollard presents, should guide further data collection on (and generate broader awareness of) ancient Michoacán. If it achieves this desirable effect, *Taricuri's Legacy* will have served to promote a much better definition and understanding of pre-Hispanic Mesoamerican diversity and long-term change.

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Vision and Revision in Maya Studies. Edited by FLORA S. CLANCY and PETER D. HARRISON. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1990. Maps. Figures. Bibliography. Index. x, 224 pp. Cloth. \$40.00.

It is often stated that archaeologists, anthropologists, art historians, and ethno-historians of the Maya would all benefit from studying each other's scholarship as