

emerged triumphant only after considerable disorder and bloodshed. In this brief study, historian Linda Arnold urges us to leave behind simplistic stereotypes and, instead, to explore the complexities of an era that laid the groundwork for a uniquely Mexican system of politics. Focusing on the Suprema Corte de Justicia, Mexico's preeminent judicial tribunal, the author makes an avowedly "modest attempt" at historical reinterpretation and examines the beginnings of what she refers to somewhat enigmatically as the "paradigm of Mexican political culture" (p. 13).

Perhaps no one knows the nineteenth-century holdings of the Archivo de la Suprema Corte de Justicia as well as Linda Arnold, and she draws upon years of research in this seldom used repository to examine the role of the Supreme Court and its relation to other branches of government in the early national period. In successive chapters, the book describes the political and financial challenges in creating a viable Supreme Court; the tribunal's struggle to find its niche in a political milieu dominated first by the legislative branch, then by the executive; the important role of the court in laying out the juridical principles of Mexican international relations; the court's relationship to local tribunals; and, finally, the position of the Supreme Court on the issues of ecclesiastical and military *fueros* and the limits of state power. On occasion, Arnold stands Mexican national mythology on its head—portraying Santa Anna in a somewhat favorable light, for example, or contending that Benito Juárez irreparably damaged the integrity and independence of the Supreme Court and paved the way for the strong executive tradition so characteristic of modern Mexican politics.

This is not an exhaustive analysis, as Arnold readily admits, and her interpretations are perhaps more suggestive than conclusive. Indeed, many events and debates crucial to the creation of the "paradigm of Mexican political culture" occurred outside the ambit of the Supreme Court and do not figure in this study. This limited scope of inquiry thus frustrates a fully articulated, more compelling reinterpretation of early-nineteenth-century Mexican political history. Still, Arnold makes a considerable contribution by sketching out the activities of the Supreme Court in its formative stage and offering a fresh perspective on the period.

Unfortunately for the author, the clumsy Spanish translation of her original English manuscript is utterly lacking in literary style and diminishes the readability of the text. Translation is an art, and the publisher should have taken more care to present a suitable product.

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*Revolución y contienda política en Guanajuato, 1908–1913.* By MÓNICA BLANCO. Mexico City: El Colegio de México, 1995. Maps. Figures. Tables. Appendixes. Bibliography. Index. 226 pp. Paper.

At a time when popular opinion is inundated by instant experts, political spin doctors, and media sound bites, we grow all too easily accustomed to hearing how unique the

current political state of affairs is in Mexico. As Mónica Blanco's closely argued, concise study of the turbulent political landscape in the state of Guanajuato during Francisco Madero's short-lived administration makes clear, Mexico has had previous, ill-fated flirtations with democracy. The lessons Blanco has learned about why Maderismo failed in Guanajuato may be particularly relevant to contemporary discussions about the obstacles that stand in the path of democratization.

As the author is careful to point out in this revised version of her doctoral thesis, Guanajuato's role during the early years of the revolution, in comparison to more rebellious regions like the northern *frontera* or Morelos, was not particularly distinguished. While a few secondary figures such as Toribio Esquivel Obregón and Alfredo Robles Domínguez hailed from the region, and it was also the site of key Villista defeats, Guanajuato was never a notable player during the armed phase of the revolution. Not surprisingly, the region has been overlooked by revolutionary historians. Blanco seeks to fill this lacunae, implicitly arguing that there were many more Guanajuatos in Mexico than there were Sonoras, and that an understanding of Madero's failure to accommodate political interests in these quieter regions may tell us more about the pitfalls of institution building in the Mexican body politic than its more celebrated violent rebellions.

Blanco's rigorous, empirically-rich case study of local, subregional, and state politics dwells on the themes of political factionalism and the significant role that *jefes políticos* and grassroots political networks played under Maderismo. Although the emphasis is invariably on local and subregional variations and their idiosyncrasies, Blanco does an effective job of reminding the reader of how national events impinged on the ebb and flow of political maneuvering throughout the period.

Blanco's work on Guanajuato's *jefes* is particularly revealing. During the Porfiriato, these political bosses, who were appointed by the governor, became formidable power brokers between local communities and the state government. Under state law, *jefes* were not only given the authority to rule municipalities (eclipsing the power and autonomy previously held by municipal presidents), but they governed unincorporated rural communities as well. In short, they were perfectly placed to work the clientelistic pyramid to their and the Porfirian state's advantage. After Díaz's ouster, however, *jefes* were elected, not appointed, in Guanajuato and the political symbolism of this change led many to expect a more open, participatory system.

It was the opening of this new political space and the popular classes' willingness to contest this space (Blanco identifies 16 uprisings during the period); their frustration with Maderista politicians who too often resembled their predecessors in word, deed, and fraudulent electoral practices; the heavy-handed tactics employed by Maderista authorities against political opponents; and the difficulties that local authorities—*jefes* and notables alike—had in controlling and managing these popular expressions of political will, that help explain why Madero's tenure was so chaotic. If Blanco points out Maderismo's shortcomings, she also celebrates its openness and good intentions. Emphasizing (some might conclude, overemphasizing) the importance of legalism and

elections throughout the narrative, she concludes that “under Maderismo a political opening, unprecedented in Mexico, occurred” (p. 108).

Maderismo’s failure in Guanajuato was political, not military. Although this monograph rarely makes comparisons with other regions of Mexico, its findings are not inconsistent with what other scholars have surmised. Despite Madero’s plea for a return to the principles of the 1857 Constitution, Mexicans (and Guanajuato’s Maderistas themselves, apparently) were too wedded to a political culture that disdained democratic principles. Moreover, Porfirian notables continued to wield too much political power throughout the state after May 1911. Blanco’s observations about the political culture that Maderismo inherited should be food for thought for contemporary writers who wax poetic about the opening of new political space and the democratization of the PRI.

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*Summer of Discontent, Seasons of Upheaval: Elite Politics and Rural Insurgency in Yucatán, 1876–1915.* By ALLEN WELLS and GILBERT M. JOSEPH. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996. Photographs. Maps. Tables. Figures. Appendixes. Notes. Bibliography. Index. x, 406 pp. Cloth, \$55.00. Paper, \$18.95.

*Summer of Discontent, Seasons of Upheaval* is the best regional study we have for the years surrounding the outbreak of the Revolution of 1910 in Mexico. It takes head-on the currently prevailing thesis that Yucatán experienced no revolutionary fervor until the radical general Salvador Alvarado arrived from the “outside” and imposed significant change in 1915. In exquisite detail, Wells and Joseph demonstrate how the economic downturn that started in the 1890s and the political vacuum created by the unseating of President Porfirio Díaz in 1911 combined to stimulate widespread demand for social reform on the peninsula, much of it fueled by Maya peons and urban workers who followed local leaders. In doing so the authors close the gap in a most enterprising and original way between their previous, individually-written, fine monographs: *Yucatán’s Gilded Age* (Wells) and *Revolution from Without* (Joseph).

In many ways this is a bold book, well written and clearly argued. Starting with their stimulating introduction, the authors lay out the conceptual issues au courant in the field, such as the nature of the so-called dialogue between elites and popular groups, the ways in which official documents should be read, the question of what the revolution changed, if anything, and the nature of the wellspring of the rebellion, popular or otherwise. On these sorts of debatable issues, Wells and Joseph take their stand but at the same time warn against an essentialist stance. They note, for example, that while riots and revolts brought rural people together around shared grievances and identities, “villagers and peons were rarely amalgamated into durable alliances. Much less did they constitute a campesino class that struggled against landowners” (p. 246). And while these lower groups (subalterns) had been struggling for social betterment for years and were therefore primed for the fundamental reforms of 1915, the changes