

Mexican art. While her considerations of these questions are appropriate, it would have been instructive to situate them in a specific theoretical context. Occasionally one encounters peculiar word choices. For instance, in her discussion of the use of European classical models to depict Indians, Widdifield states that “the history painter could diminish traces of the Indian by lightening skin color and anglicizing facial features” (p.101). The equation of classical with English is unexplained in the text.

Widdifield presents complex ideas clearly and concisely. She has carried out commendable archival research for her study, and the illustrations she has chosen include important, little-known works of Mexican art. This text is not only “foundational” in the field of Mexican art history, but it is recommended reading for anyone interested in the elaborate weaving of history, culture, and society in late-nineteenth-century Mexico.

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The Power of God against the Guns of Government: Religious Upheaval in Mexico at the Turn of the Nineteenth Century. By PAUL J. VANDERWOOD. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998. Photographs. Illustrations. Maps. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xiii, 409 pp. Cloth, \$65.00. Paper, \$24.95.

In 1891 the people of Tomóchic, a mestizo village of some three hundred inhabitants, nestled in a valley in the Sierra Madre mountains of Chihuahua, boldly defied the government of Porfirio Díaz. In bloody encounters they initially repelled the superior Federal army; but they were finally worn down: the men were slain, the women and children were scattered through the sierra, their homes were razed to the ground. Like the contemporaneous followers of Antônio Conselheiro at Canudos in the Brazilian backlands, the Tomóchic rebels claimed divine inspiration, to the point of (allegedly) believing themselves immune to bullets. Their resolute but ultimately suicidal resistance similarly taxed the powers of an overweening “positivistic” state, committed to “order and progress”; it also earned the admiration of critics of the regime, while affording an opportunity for local political “outs” to steal a march on their discredited opponents. (Hence, Tomóchic directly contributed to the creation of the Terrazas-Creel monopoly of Chihuahuan politics, which would in turn help provoke the Revolution of 1910.) “Tomóchic is horrible beyond belief,” wrote commanding Federal general Rosendo Márquez, “one could write a novel about each of its episodes” (p. 282). Indeed, Heriberto Frías’s *Tomóchic* was a worthy—and, in its day, widely read—narrative of the rebellion, though it never attained the mythic status of da Cunha’s *Os sertões*.

Paul Vanderwood has set out to write, if not a novel, certainly a history that strives to reconstruct, evoke, and narrate the “horrible-beyond-belief” story of the Tomóchic revolt. Actually he has done rather more, since, as his subtitle suggests, he locates Tomóchic within a broader band of religious movements, some influenced by Protestantism and spiritism, several inspired by the young seer and healer Santa Teresa de Cabora, whose fascinating story threads through the book. Northern Mexico—

conventionally seen as relatively “modern,” progressive, liberal, and even Jacobin—thus becomes the site of a series of popular religious movements that, “at the turn of the nineteenth century” (i.e., the 1890s), coursed through Chihuahua and Sonora, affecting regional politics, alarming church and state alike. Building on the work of regional historians, whose work he fully recognizes, Vanderwood has conducted exhaustive archival research and thus recounts the story in depth and detail, regularly pausing for perceptive analysis of major themes: popular religion, military organization, high and low politics. There are some telling vignettes: thumbnail portraits of the cacique Joaquín Chávez and of the local liberal pedagogue, Reyes Domínguez, venting his dislike of Tomóchic’s “fanatics” in the margins of his copy of Michelet (pp. 64, 125–30). The book evokes northern village life in the mid-Porfiriato; the frontier mentality of the Apache-fighting serranos; the logic of camarilla politics, national, state and local; and the gross incompetence of the Porfirian military—exemplified by the “unrepentant alcoholic” Felipe Cruz, regularly put to bed, besotted, by his aides, who, like a drunken Don Quijote, charged the Tomóchic cornfields one moonlit night, “slashing at the corn stalks with his saber,” “thinking them [to be] the enemy” (pp. 251, 263).

As suggested by his main title (conforming to the new stereotype: a thoroughly nonspecific but catchy alliteration), Vanderwood sees the Tomochitecos’ motivation as essentially religious. He scouts other factors—droughts, political impositions, caciquismo, factionalism, the vicissitudes of mining—but religion remains the *fons et origo*. “We are going to determine what our religion means to us and how we will practice it,” declares the Tomóchic leader, Cruz Chávez (p. 214; what appears as a quote is in fact an authorial imputation). During their brief moment of autonomy, the Tomochitecos “reveled in nothing less than ardent religious revival” (p. 254). Clearly, it is no easy matter to penetrate the minds of largely illiterate rebels of a century ago; and—as the author is well aware—we must beware the bulk of written sources that, emanating from government ministries or the United States and Mexican press, were highly tendentious. (Examples of gross United States press distortion recur.) The Porfirian regime wanted to depict the rebels as Indians (which they weren’t) and “fanatics” (which they might have been). Certainly the rebels—Vanderwood increasingly refers to them as the “pious” or the “faithful”—were strongly influenced by the Santa Teresa cult. Yet while the cult was widespread, the revolt was unique. Even pueblos that shared many of Tomóchic’s grievances—for “Tomóchic in essence resembled other pueblos in the valley”—failed to stir (pp. 129–30). Protests occurred elsewhere in Chihuahua in the 1880s and 1890s, but only that in Tomóchic assumed—or was seen to assume—the guise of religious revivalism. Nevertheless, the nature of this revivalism remains debatable. Vanderwood stresses mystical beliefs and apocalyptic visions. Yet the evidence for genuine millenarianism—proof that the Tomochitecos thought they were inaugurating the millenium, rather than fighting a local conflict under the banner of an inspirational cult—is sketchy (e.g., pp. 230–32). It also tends to derive from “hostile” sources, which sought to depict the rebels as other-worldly fanatics, rather than this-worldly political dissidents (compare Francisco Almada’s 1938 study, *La rebelión de*

Tomochi). Certainly we must defer to the author's extensive and judicious marshalling of evidence; but—notably toward the end of the book, when he discusses the present-day cult of Santa Teresa—Vanderwood slips into partisanship, apparently crediting miracles, extolling the “sublime state of community” that the cult fosters, discerning “as we approach a new millenium . . . a heightened expectation . . . of a promised coming,” and taking a swipe at those who, “their vision clouded by ‘enlightenment,’ allay their apprehensions about this (millenarian) conviction by labeling it ‘superstition’” (pp. 320–29).

Finally, a word on style. In his sustained, and generally very successful, effort to evoke the life and times of the Tomochitecos, Vanderwood resorts to a good deal of graphic (“thick?”) description and colloquial language. Coffee has to be “strong” or “potent”; the priest rides out of town “with a wary eye cast back over his shoulder”; the Federal troops “nervously counted and recounted the[ir] 100 cartridges” (pp. 160, 232, 51, 265). Maybe the sources tell us these things; it is not clear. Also, while the author—much to his credit—has no time for the vapid vacuities and circumlocutions that mar so much recent sociocultural history, he likes the colloquial, common touch: “no, Cabora was hardly a garden spot”; “the gang...hanged a few folks”; “Papigochi women . . . could hold their own and then some” (pp. 161, 258, 200). In short, readers who like a vernacular style and can take a dose of spirituality will be delighted; those who prefer Gibbonian style and skepticism (a frowsty minority, no doubt) will occasionally balk. No reader, however, can fail to be impressed by the depth of the research, by the intrinsic importance and interest of the story, graphically told, and by the light which it sheds on multiple aspects of Porfirian Mexico: its politics, social structure, and popular beliefs. Combining these virtues, *The Power of God* is a book that will last well into the next millenium, and—if I might hazard a prophecy—could well outlive the cult of Santa Teresa.

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The Transformation of Rural Mexico: Reforming the Ejido Sector. Edited by WAYNE A. CORNELIUS and DAVID MYHRE. U.S.-Mexico Contemporary Perspective Series, no. 12. San Diego: Center for U.S.-Mexican Studies, University of California, San Diego, 1998. Tables. Figures. Notes. Bibliographies. x, 437 pp. Paper, \$21.95.

In 1992 the Mexican government under President Carlos Salinas de Gortari enacted a new agrarian law that reversed several key provisions of Article 27 of the Constitution of 1917. In keeping with the Salinas administration's broader program of liberalizing markets and opening trade, the law ended the government's formal obligation to distribute land to the peasantry and to maintain production guarantees on basic grains for land recipients. Under the old ejido system, regional or village-based groups held inalienable use-rights to parcels of land, which they farmed collectively or individually. The laws enacted in 1992 permitted ejidatarios to privatize and sell land and to enter into a variety of partnerships with the private sector; they also facilitated the efforts of ejidatarios to make improvements on their lands.