

The first four chapters analyze the national state as an emerging juridical concept in Mexico from the Wars of Independence through the mid-1830s. This section also includes a discussion of the material, cultural, and ideological bases of the era's myriad conflicts. The last five chapters are organized thematically rather than chronologically. One chapter places Mexican constitutionalism in comparative perspective, while the others examine competing notions of political and personal liberty, the organization of the federal government, church-state relations, and education.

The book has a number of strong points. The thematic chapters contain cogent analyses of the essential political fault lines during this era of upheaval. The author engages a wide variety of primary and secondary sources, which adds to the book's historiographical value. Particular praise is due the extensive analysis of the pamphlets and newspaper editorials generated by the era's protagonists to justify both their specific actions and broader philosophical positions. Finally, an extensive bibliography points the reader toward additional sources, many of which are not cited directly in the text.

The book is marred by several problems, however. Some of these problems beset any researcher who ventures into this period of Mexican history, including this reviewer. The most vexing of these may be the selection of beginning and ending points, if one rejects the standard political chronology. It is to the author's credit that he attempts to bridge the gap between Iturbide's brief monarchy and the formation of a federal republic; but he fails to incorporate fully a discussion of the preindependence legislation and political culture that formed so much of the context in which the debates of the 1820s and 1830s played out. Furthermore, he never explains his reasons for ending the book without addressing the formation of a centralist regime and a new constitution in the mid-1830s. In addition, a number of individuals discussed in the book are never properly introduced to the reader (some actors, for example, are never identified by their full names or positions); nor are many events explained or contextualized sufficiently.

The addition of a concluding chapter would have given the author the opportunity to tie together some of these loose ends and review his principal findings, and is therefore sorely missed. In sum, *La formación de un estado nacional en México* is a valuable book for the specialist, but its broader audience will be frustrated by these shortcomings.

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Mexicans at Arms: Puro Federalists and the Politics of War, 1845–1848. By PEDRO SANTONI. Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1996. Notes. Bibliography. Index. xi, 323 pp. Cloth. \$29.50.

Any glance at recent volumes of the *Handbook of Latin American Studies* or similar bibliographical aids confirms that political history has not been fashionable for some years. As far as the Age of Santa Anna in Mexico is concerned, that is a pity,

because it means that the national political scene largely remains, as Howard Cline rightly described it years ago, “a labyrinth in which even specialists are sometimes lost.” Fortunately, there are signs that the pendulum of historical fashion is moving in the direction of at least some narrative, chronological analysis of the apparent chaos of the postindependence decades. Important work on the minutiae of politics and politicians is now being done, nowhere more effectively than by young scholars at El Colegio de México, under the expert guidance of Josefina Vázquez. This book is a good example. By restricting his attention to a limited timespan, 1845–1848, Pedro Santoni has produced a comprehensive and highly informative analysis of the political turmoil so characteristic of the time and so difficult to follow.

The focus is the conflict between *puros* and *moderados*, or radical and moderate liberals, personified by their respective leaders, Valentín Gómez Farías and Manuel Gómez Pedraza. The early chapters explain the differences between these and other political groups, correctly emphasizing the importance of personalities as well as ideologies. The following chapters or sections then move through the fall of Santa Anna in 1844, the Herrera administration of 1845, and the brief promonarchist interlude of Paredes y Arrillaga. The central chapters deal with the restoration of federalism in 1846 and the subsequent *puro-moderado* rivalry, which in many ways reached its peak during the war with the United States.

There is no fuller or better account than this of the *puro-moderado* conflict at the national level or the relations between Gómez Farías and Santa Anna. Santoni’s command of a vast range of sources, primary and secondary, enables him to penetrate and elucidate the motivations, ambitions, conduct, alliances, and conspiracies of a wide range of Mexico’s politicians. The picture that emerges is not flattering. While the nation was at war, monarchists, annexationists, supporters of Santa Anna’s dictatorial ambitions, republicans of various hues, conservatives, *puros*, *moderados*, and diverse other factions plotted and maneuvered for personal and political gain. It is easy to sympathize with José Fernando Ramírez’s remark of August 1846, “I still cannot get a clear idea of the state of things” (quoted on p. 129). Santoni’s achievement has been to sort out the mass of detail and to lead us carefully and meticulously through the labyrinth.

The text is 235 pages. A further 86 pages are taken up with notes, bibliography, and index, all of which indicate the depth and breadth of Santoni’s research. It is not an easy book to read, but it is an admirable and major contribution to our understanding of national politics in the age of Santa Anna.

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